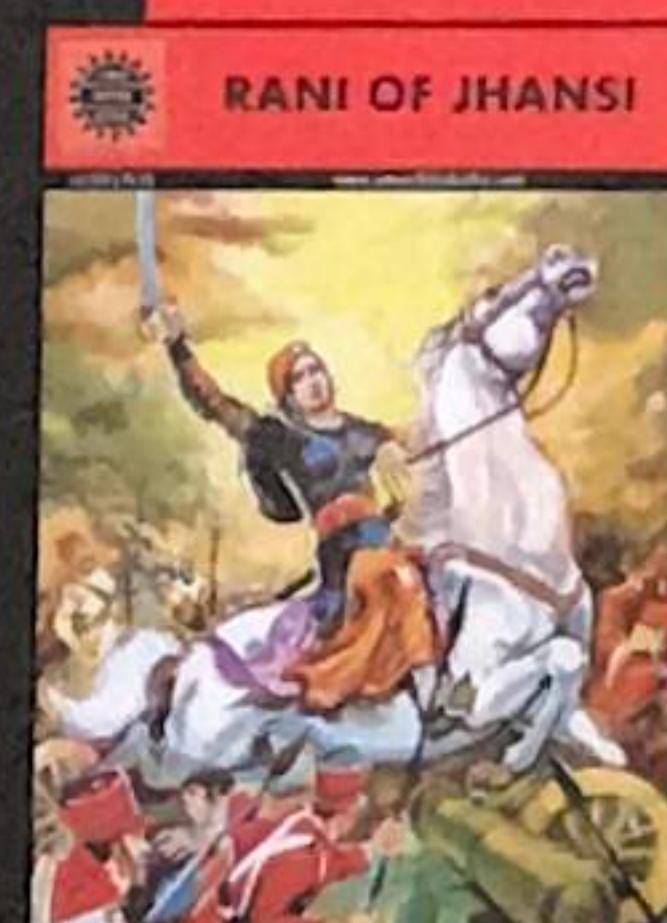
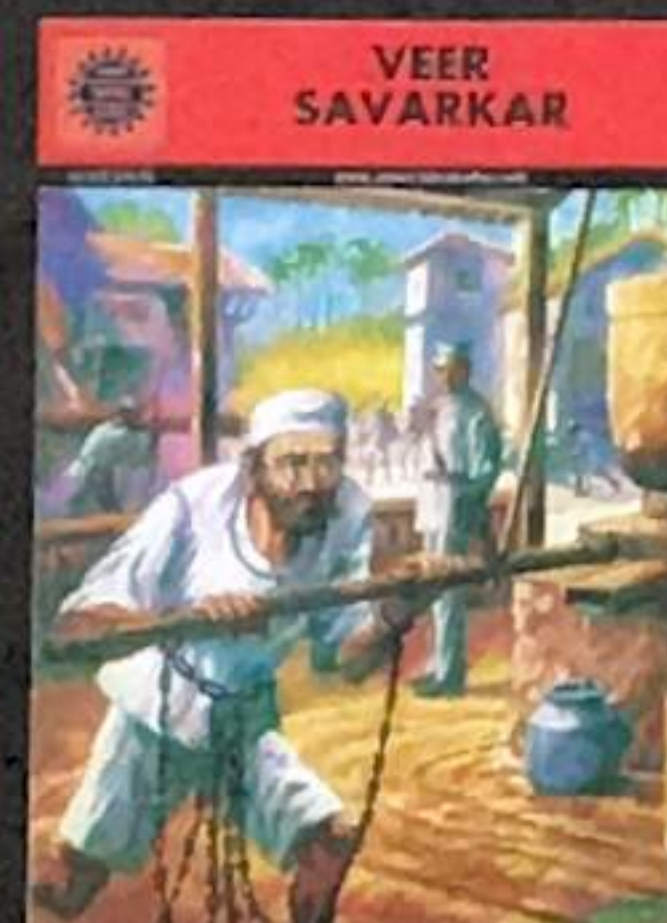
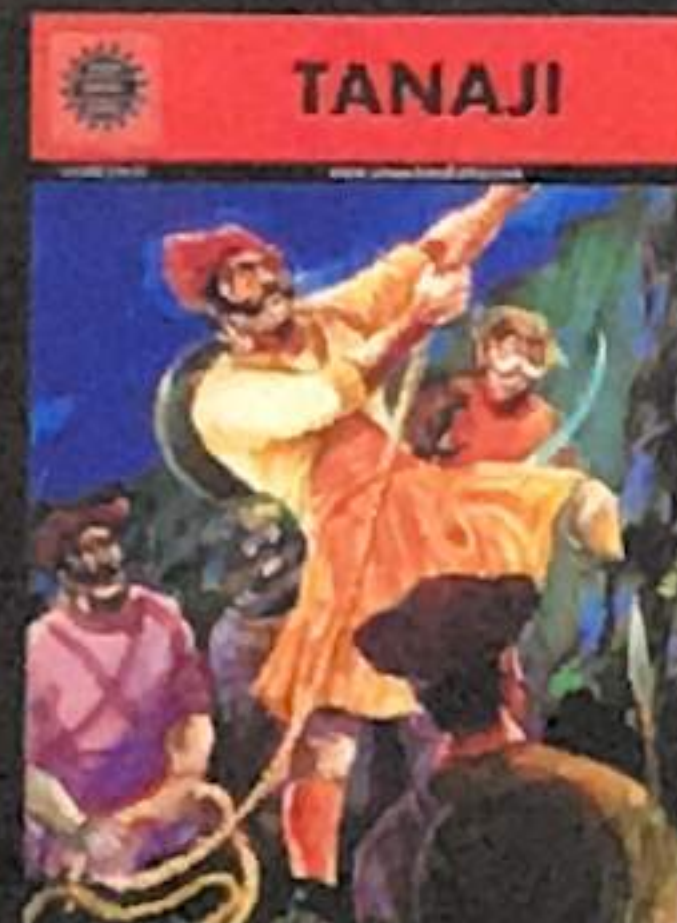
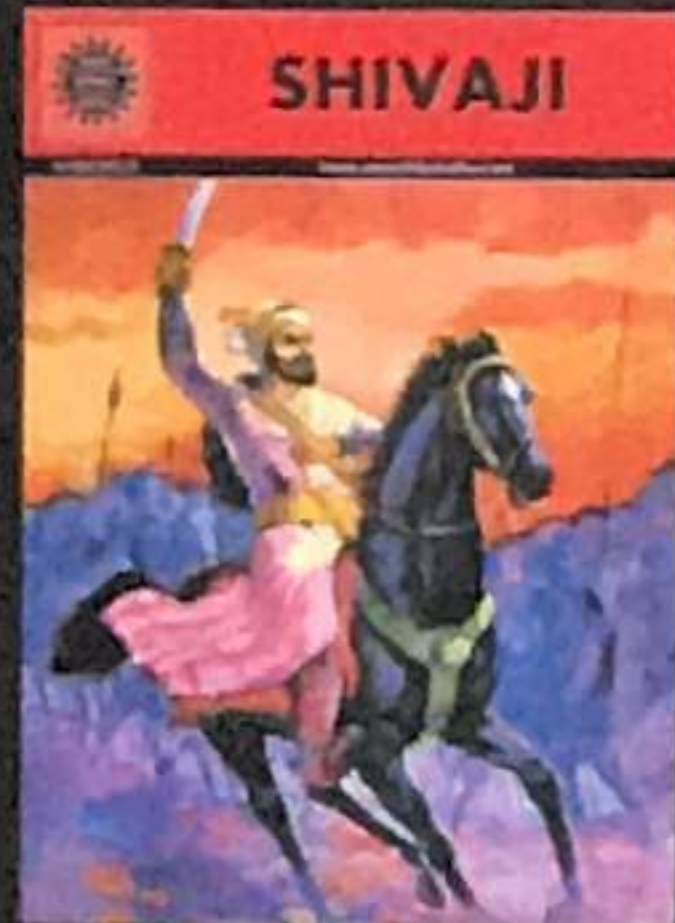


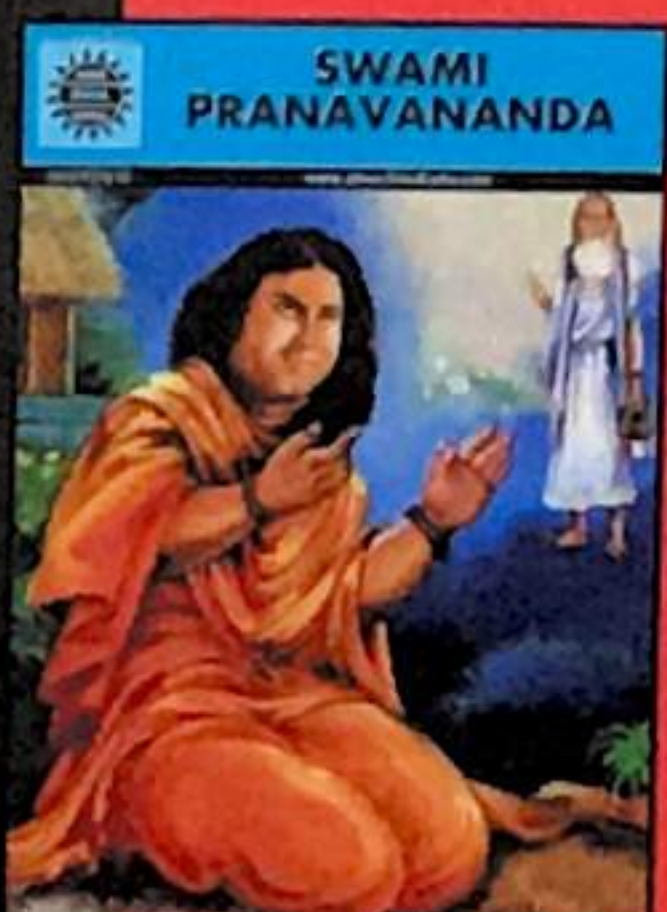
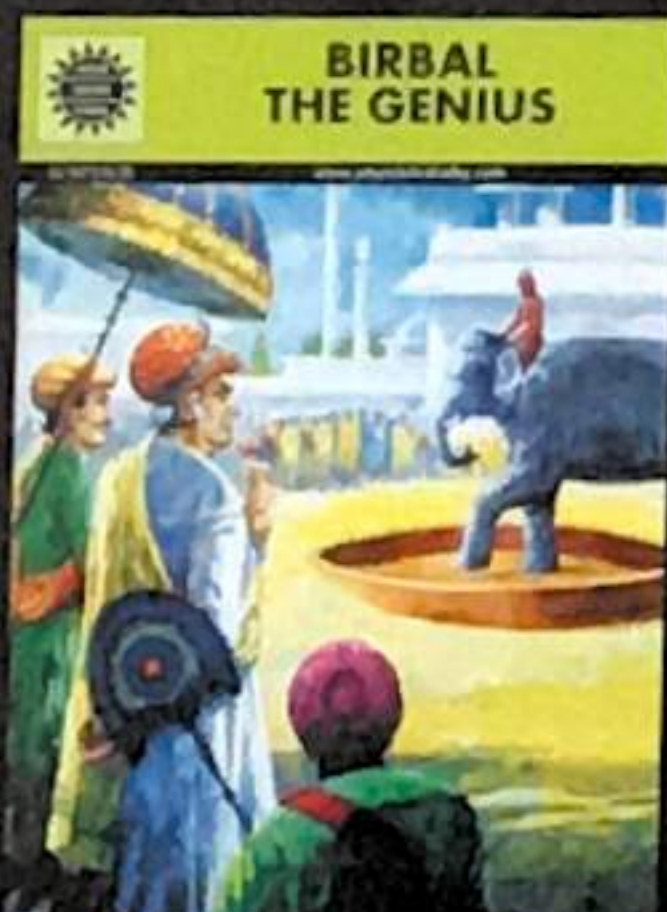
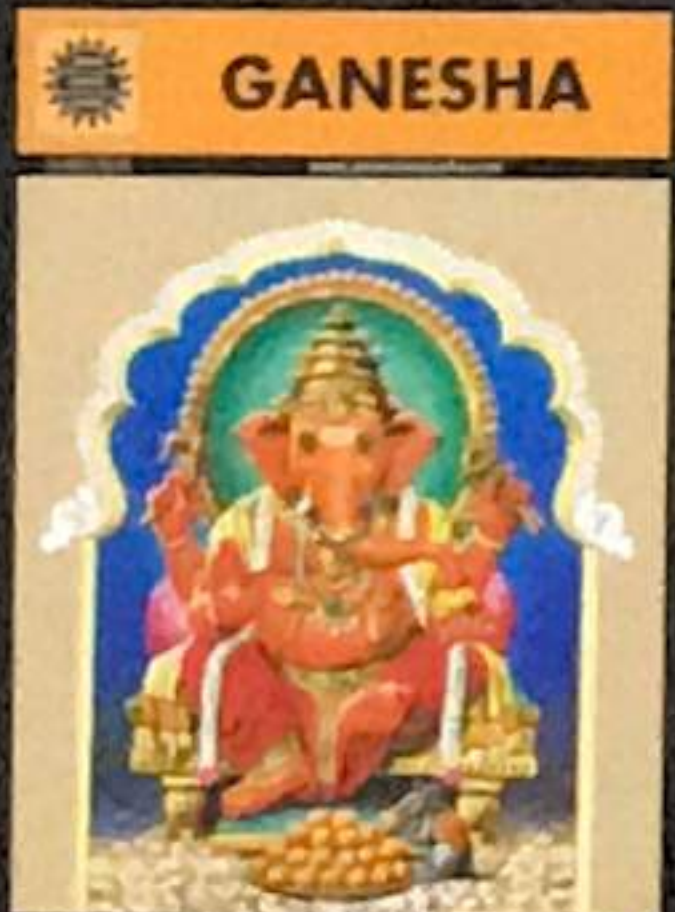
TALES OF SHIVAJI

Shivaji, famous as a warrior and patriot, was also renowned for his kindness. His behaviour managed to convert a spunky young mother, an avenging widow, and a terrified maiden into devoted friends. Not only did the powerful Maratha display humility and a constant sense of fair play, he also upheld the honour of every woman whether rich or poor, enemy or ally.

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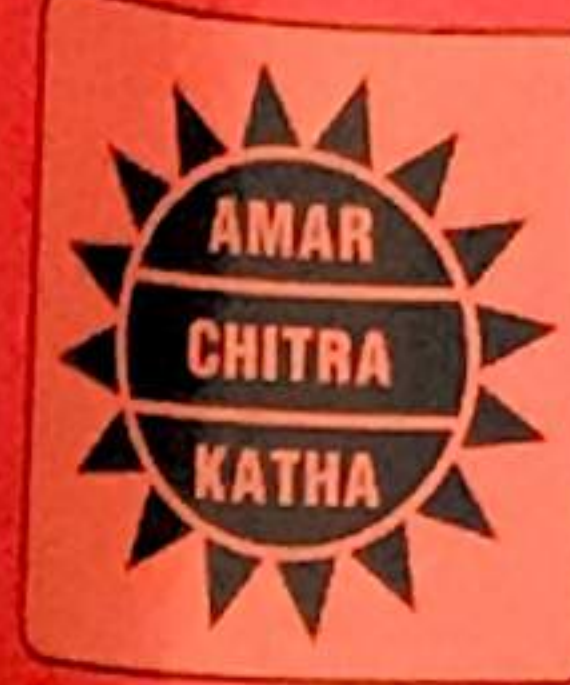
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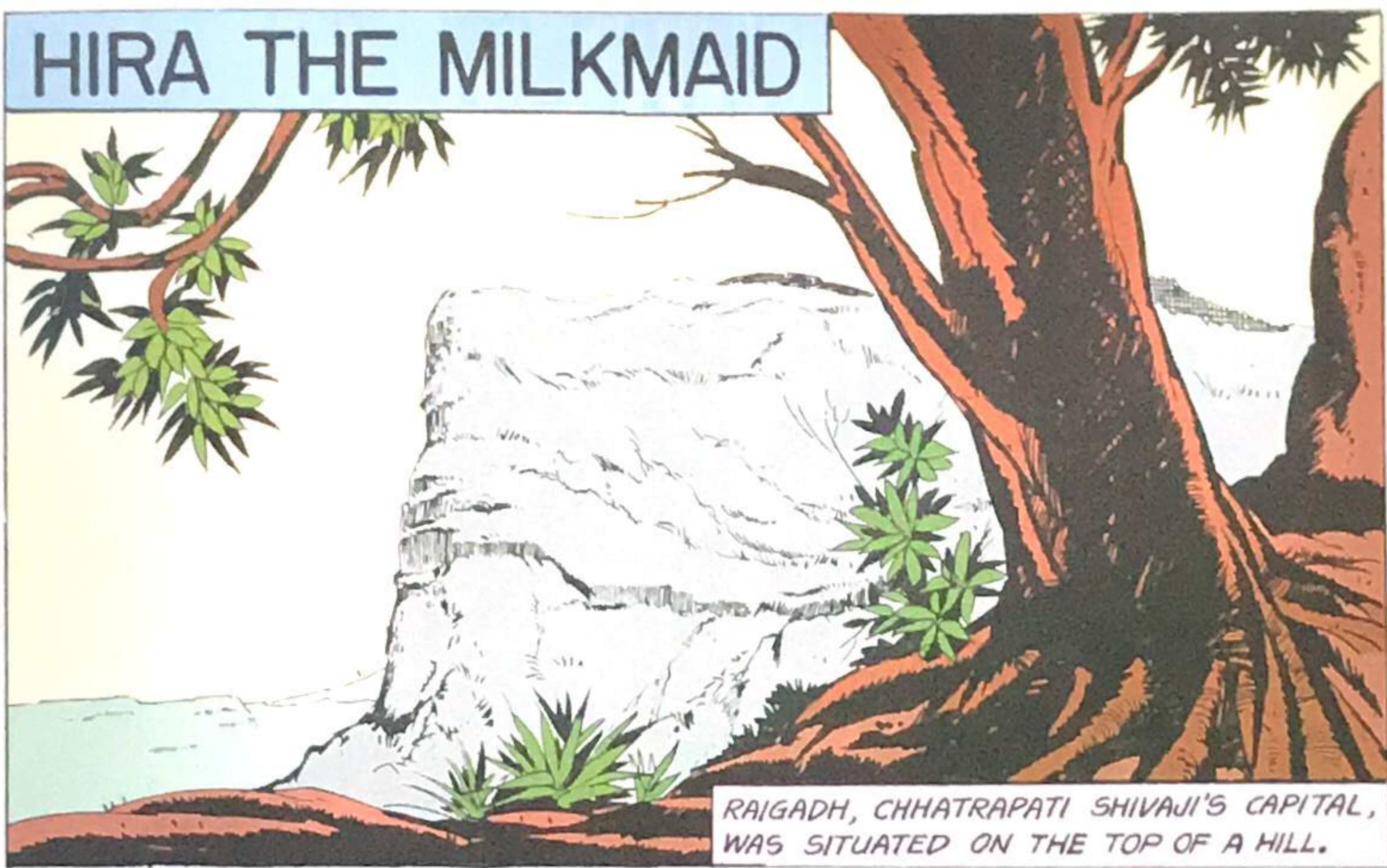


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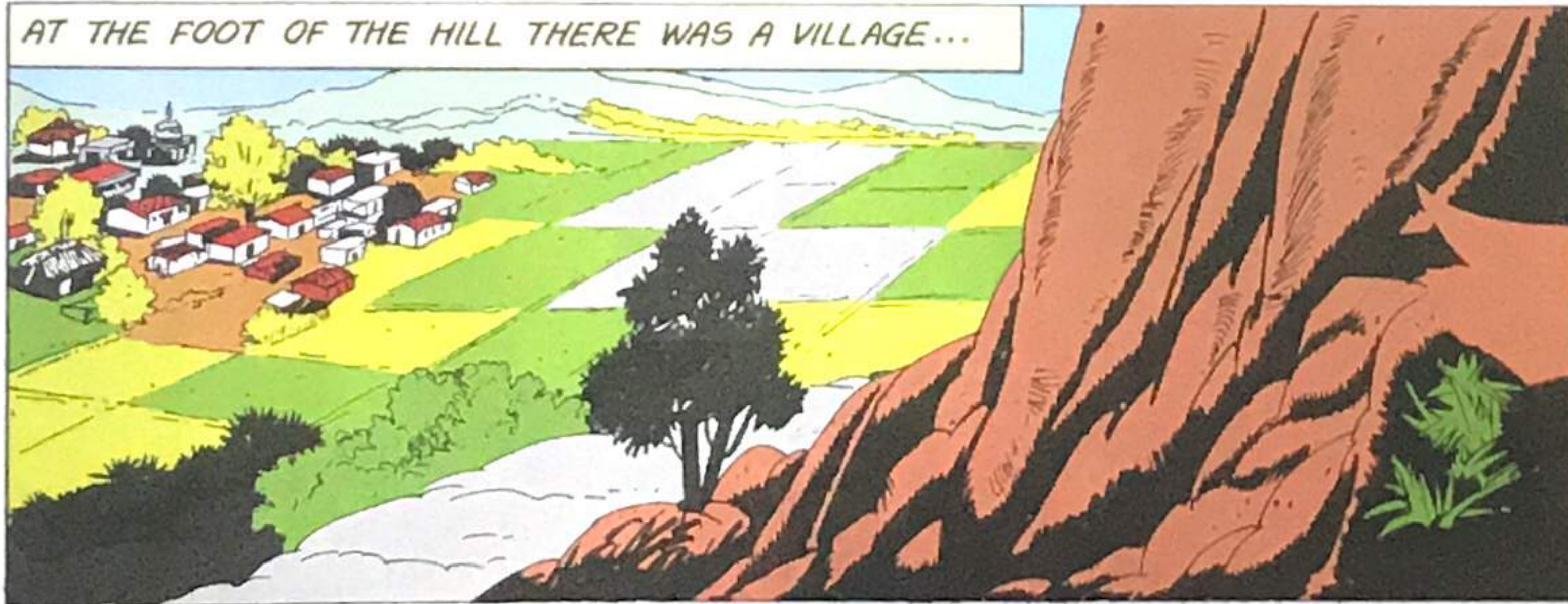
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HIRA THE MILKMAID

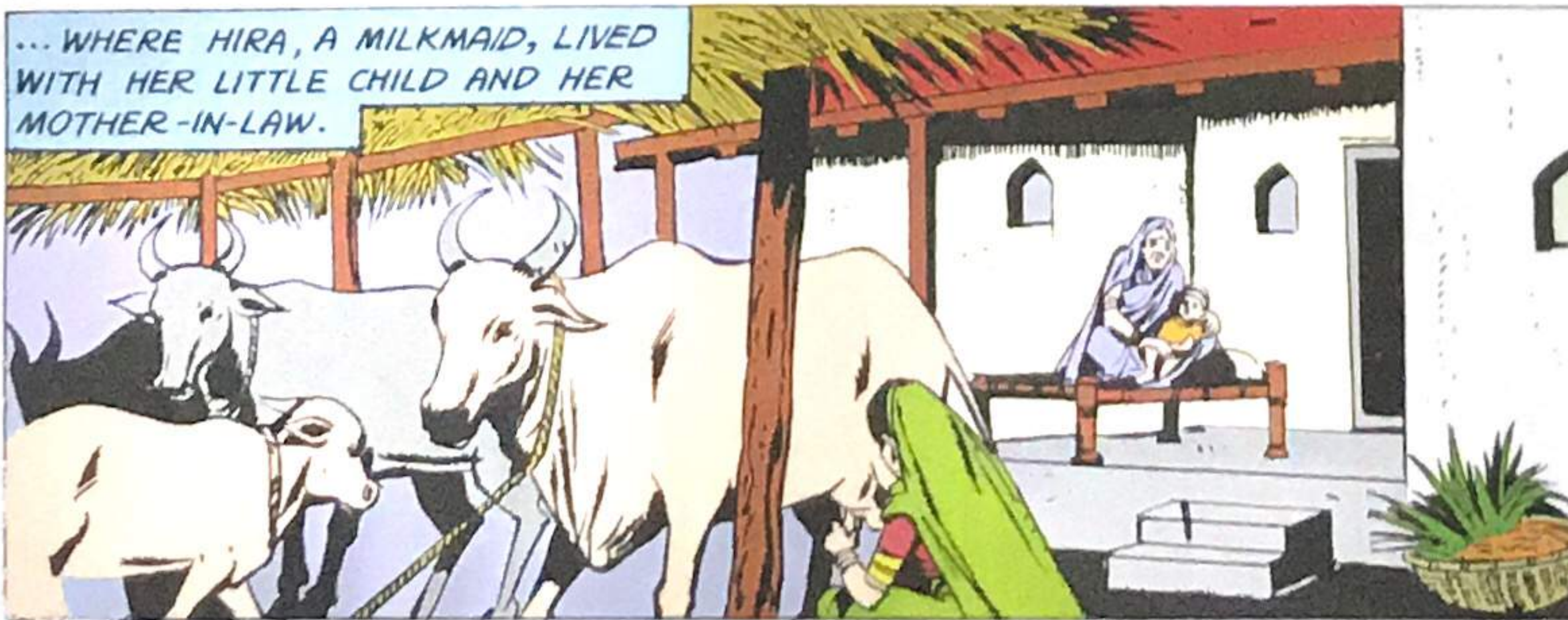


RAIGADH, CHHATRAPATI SHIVAJI'S CAPITAL, WAS SITUATED ON THE TOP OF A HILL.

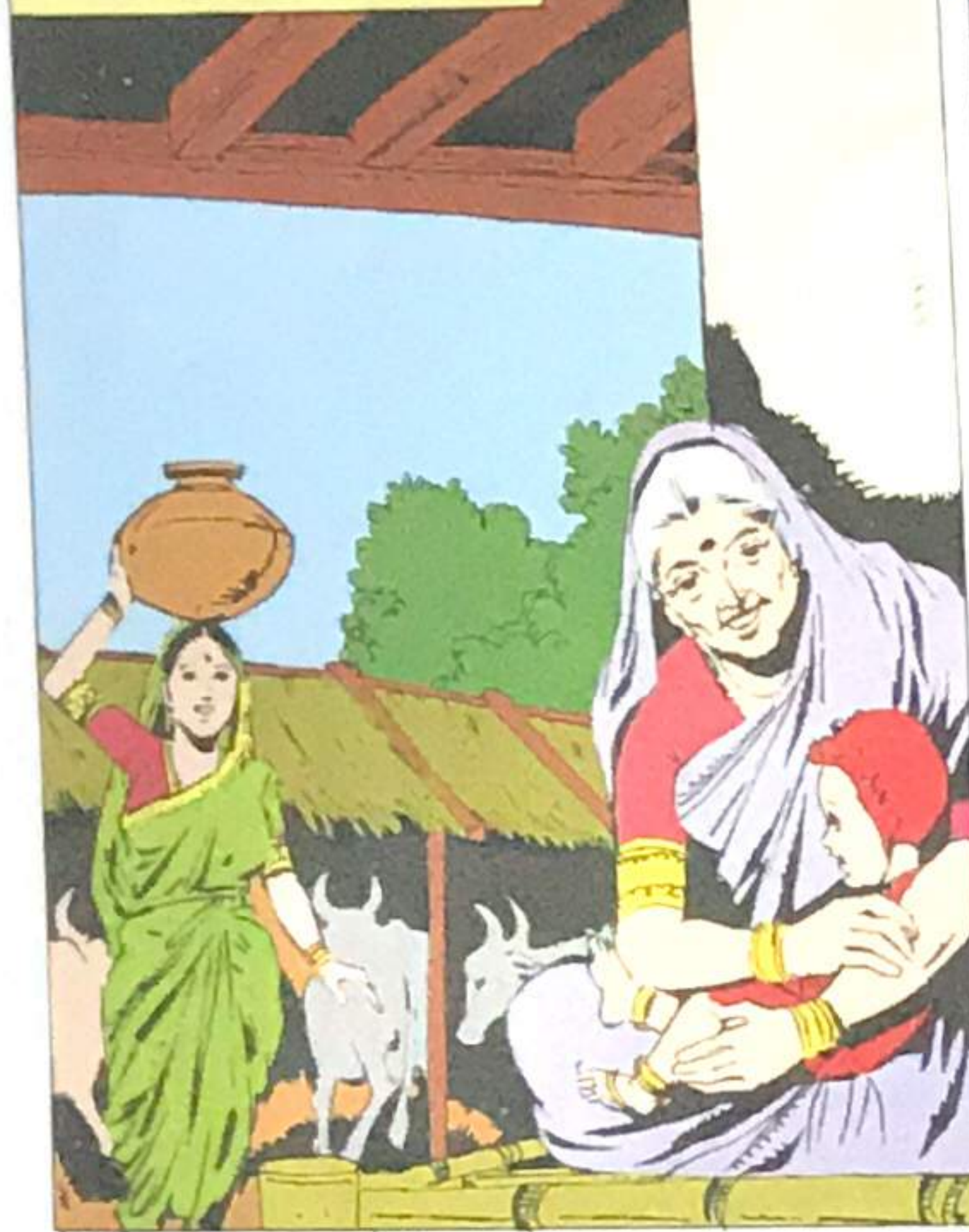
AT THE FOOT OF THE HILL THERE WAS A VILLAGE...



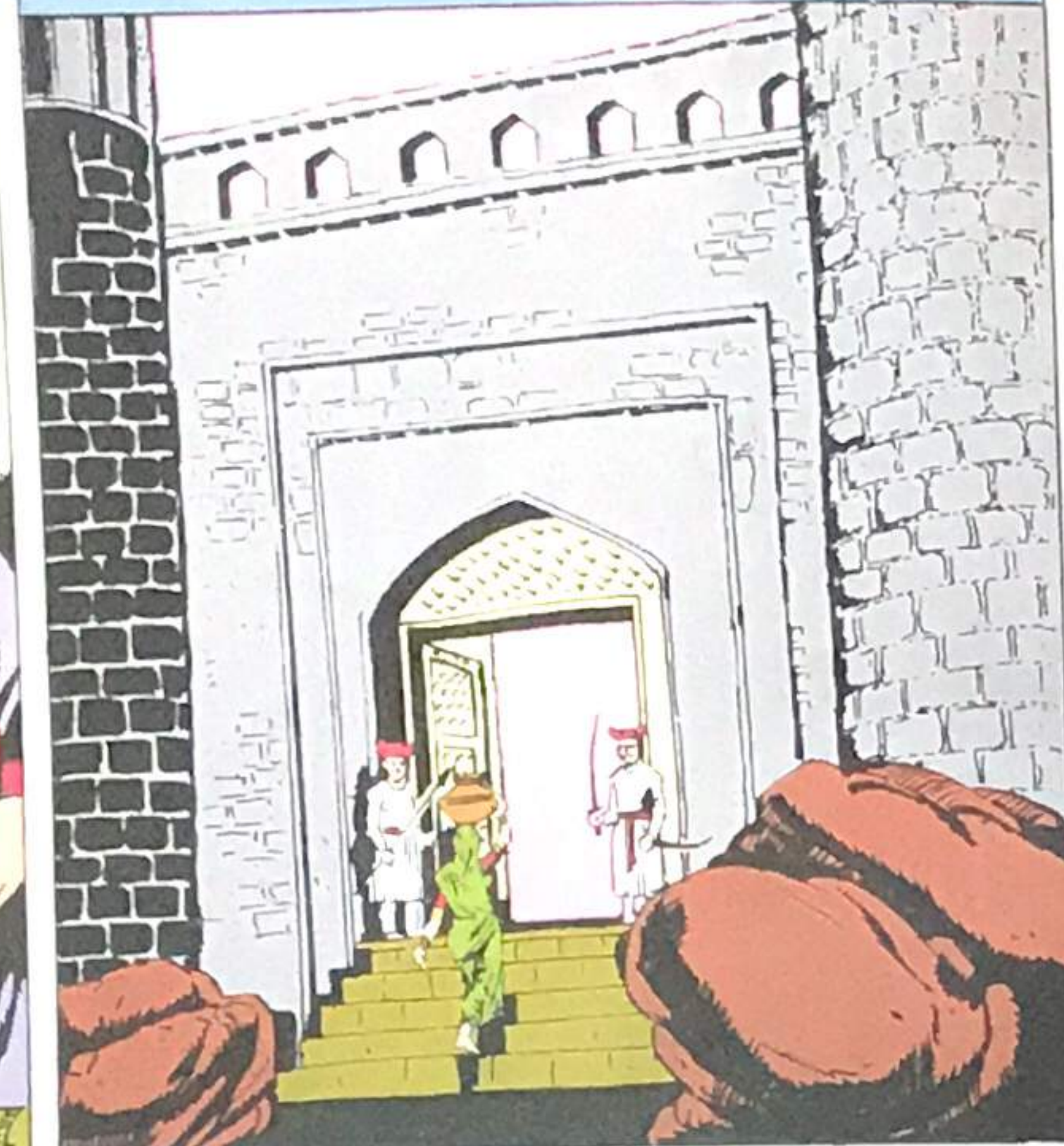
... WHERE HIRA, A MILKMAID, LIVED WITH HER LITTLE CHILD AND HER MOTHER-IN-LAW.



LEAVING HER CHILD WITH HER MOTHER-IN-LAW ...



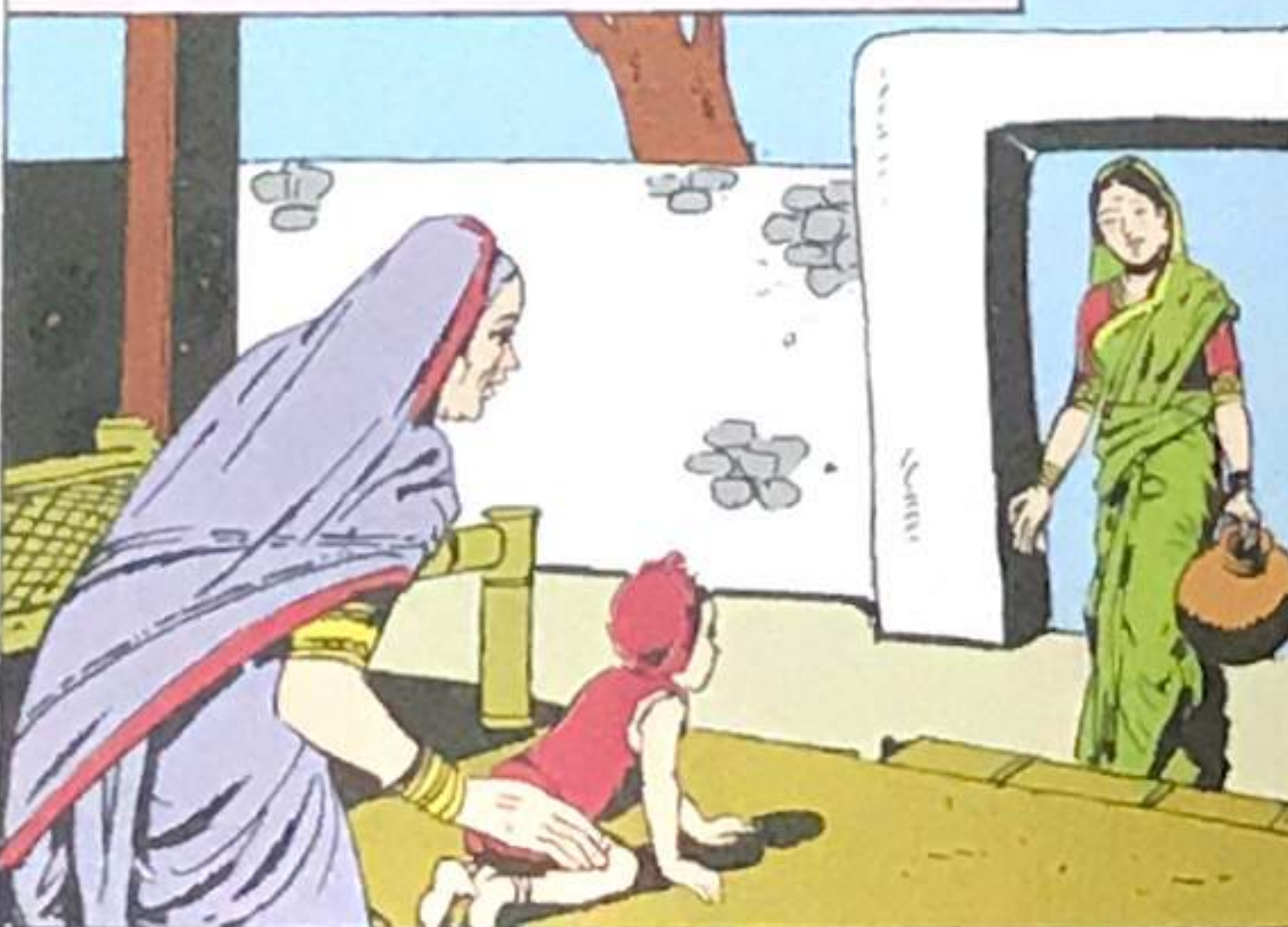
...HIRA WOULD GO TO RAIGADH TWICE A DAY— IN THE MORNING AND IN THE EVENING...



...TO SELL MILK TO THE PEOPLE IN THE FORT.



BY SUNSET SHE WOULD BE HOME AND FREE TO BE WITH HER CHILD.



ONCE, DURING THE KOJAGIRI FESTIVAL, HIRA STOPPED TO WATCH THE CELEBRATIONS, AFTER HER AFTERNOON ROUND.



CARRIED AWAY BY THE MERRY-MAKING, SHE LOST COUNT OF THE HOURS.

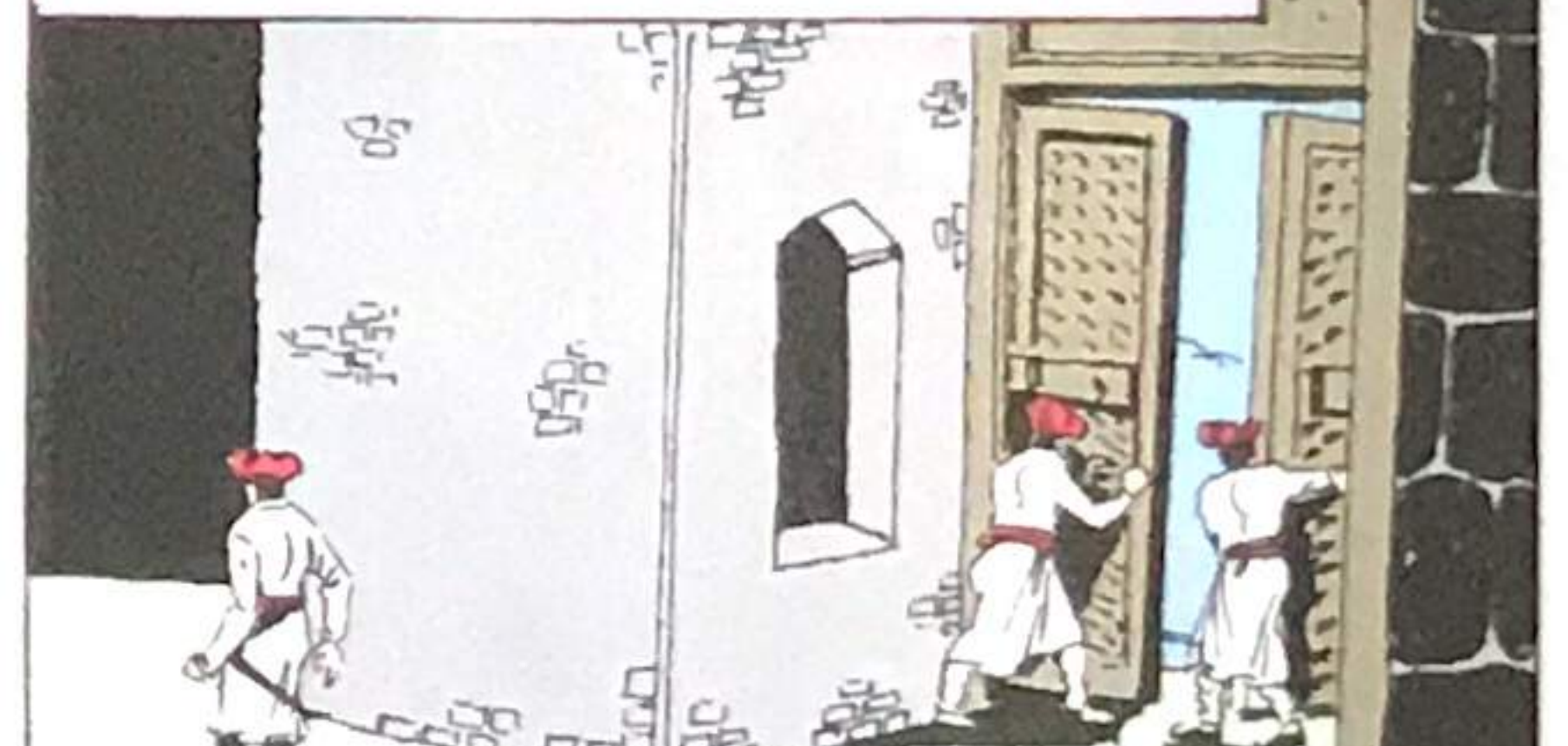


SUDDENLY —



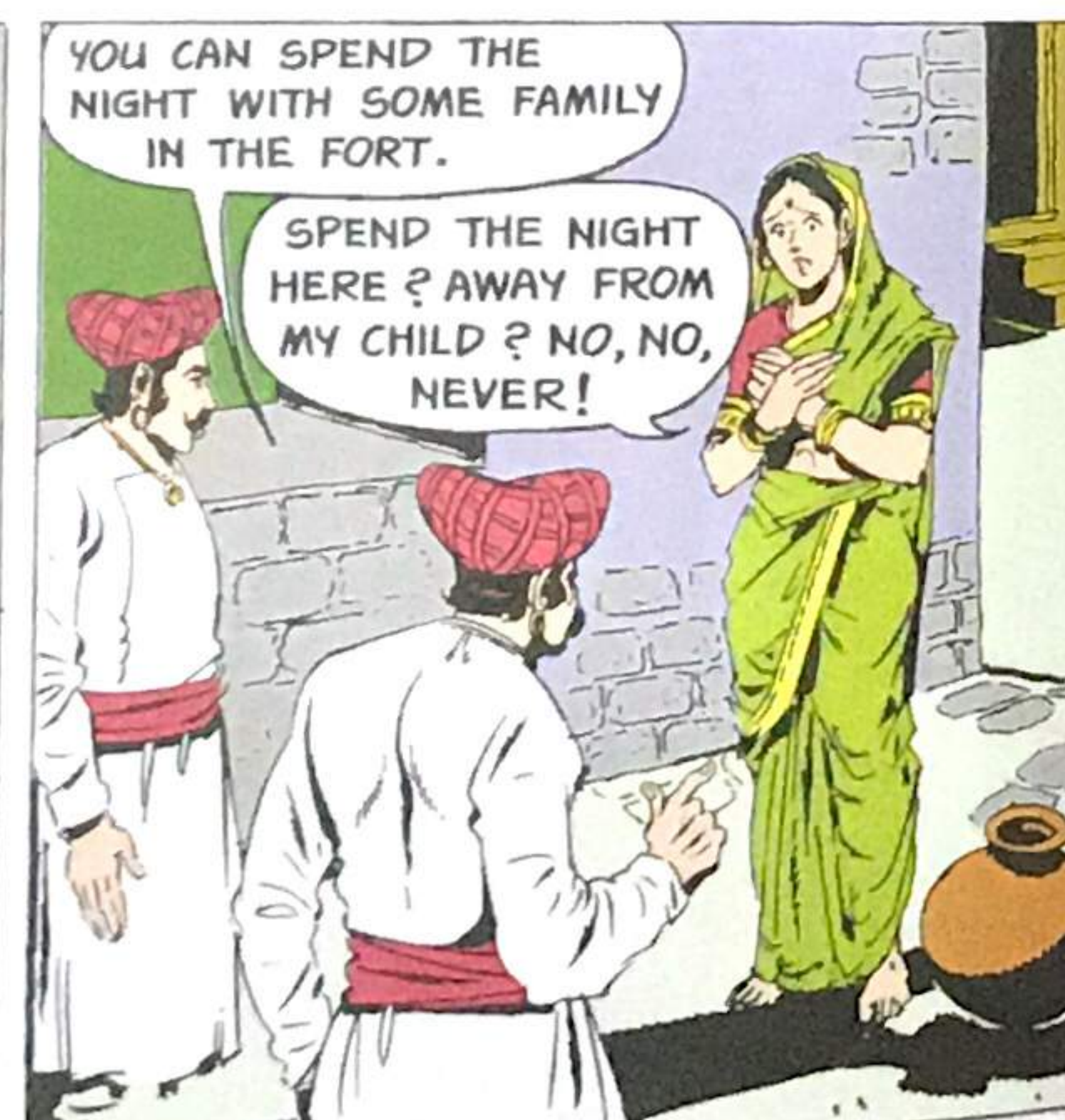
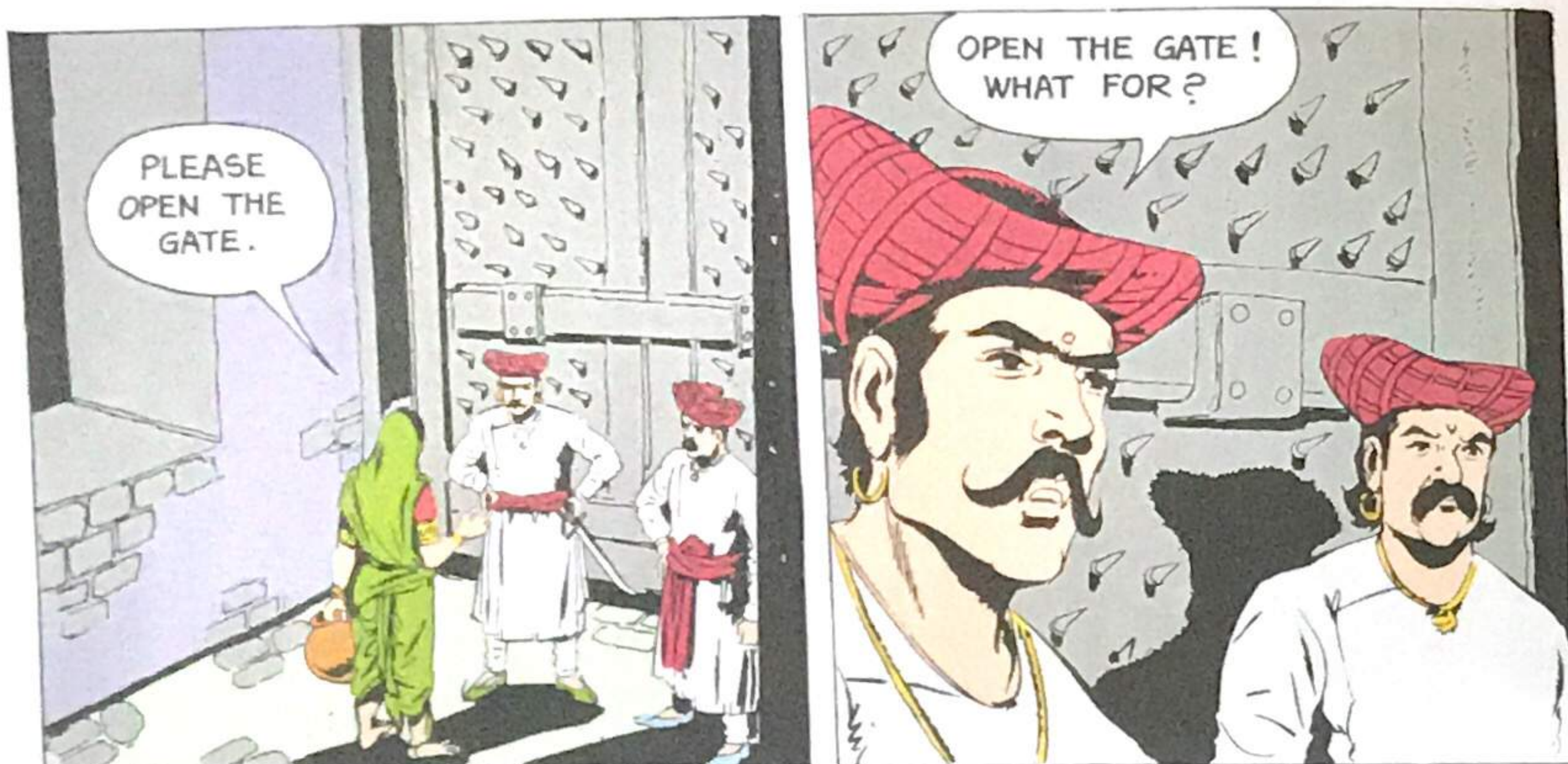
IT WAS SIX IN THE EVENING ! THE MAIN GATE OF THE FORT WOULD SOON BE CLOSED !

HIRA RAN TOWARDS THE GATE ...



...BUT IT WAS TOO LATE.

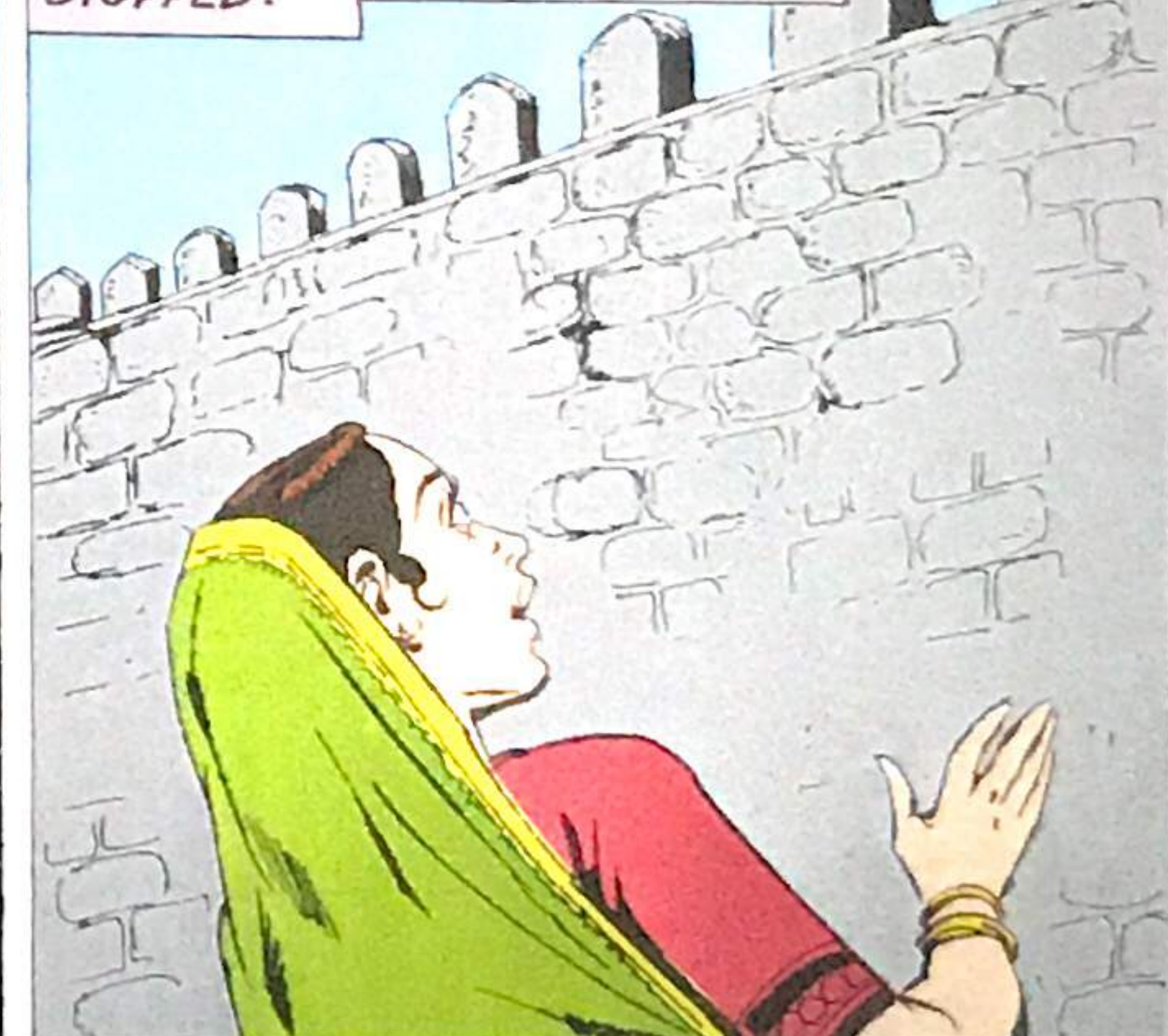




SHE KEPT WALKING ALONGSIDE THE WALL, LOOKING HOPEFULLY UP AT IT FROM TIME TO TIME.



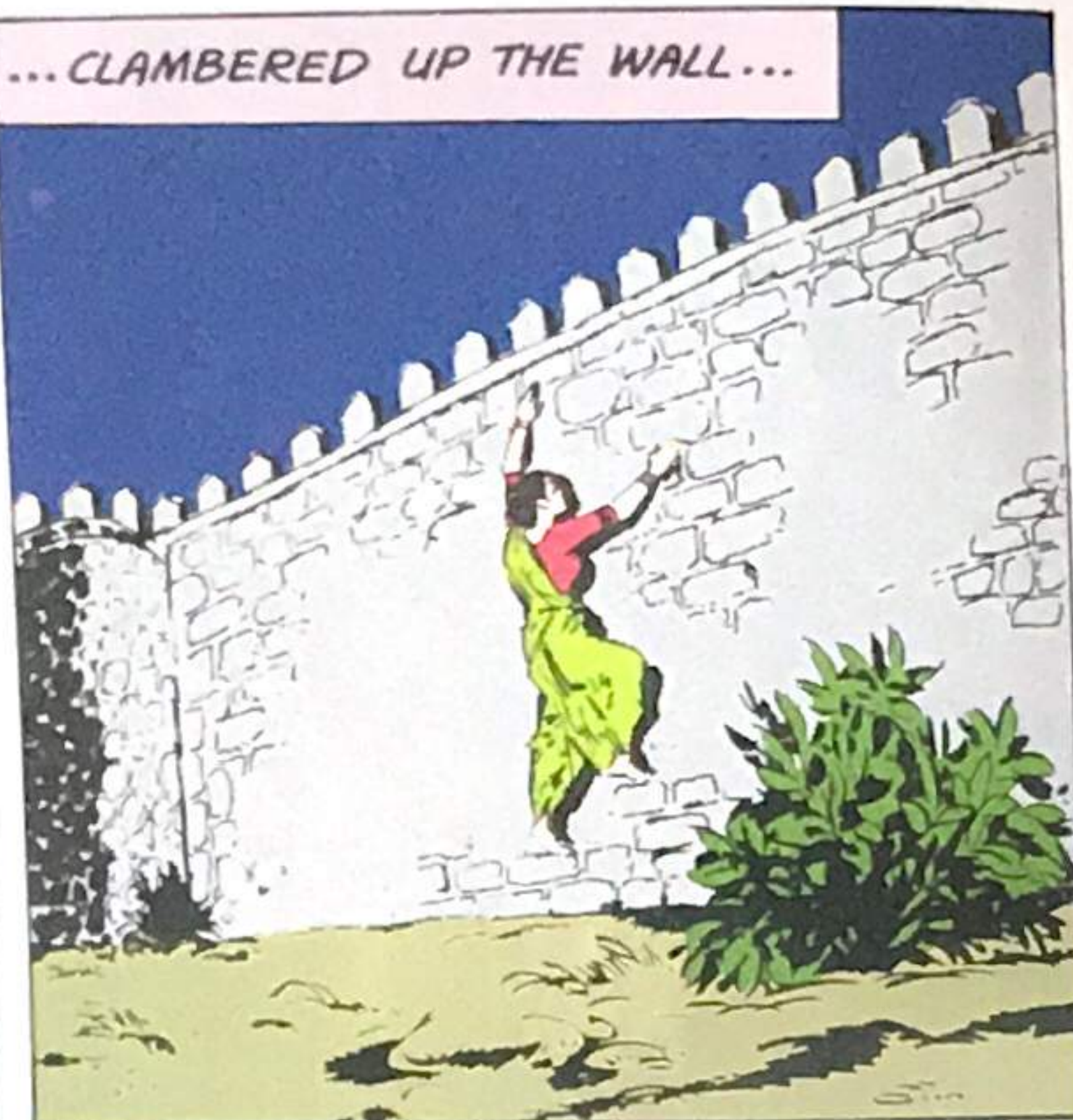
WHEN SHE REACHED THE EASTERN SIDE, SHE SUDDENLY STOPPED.



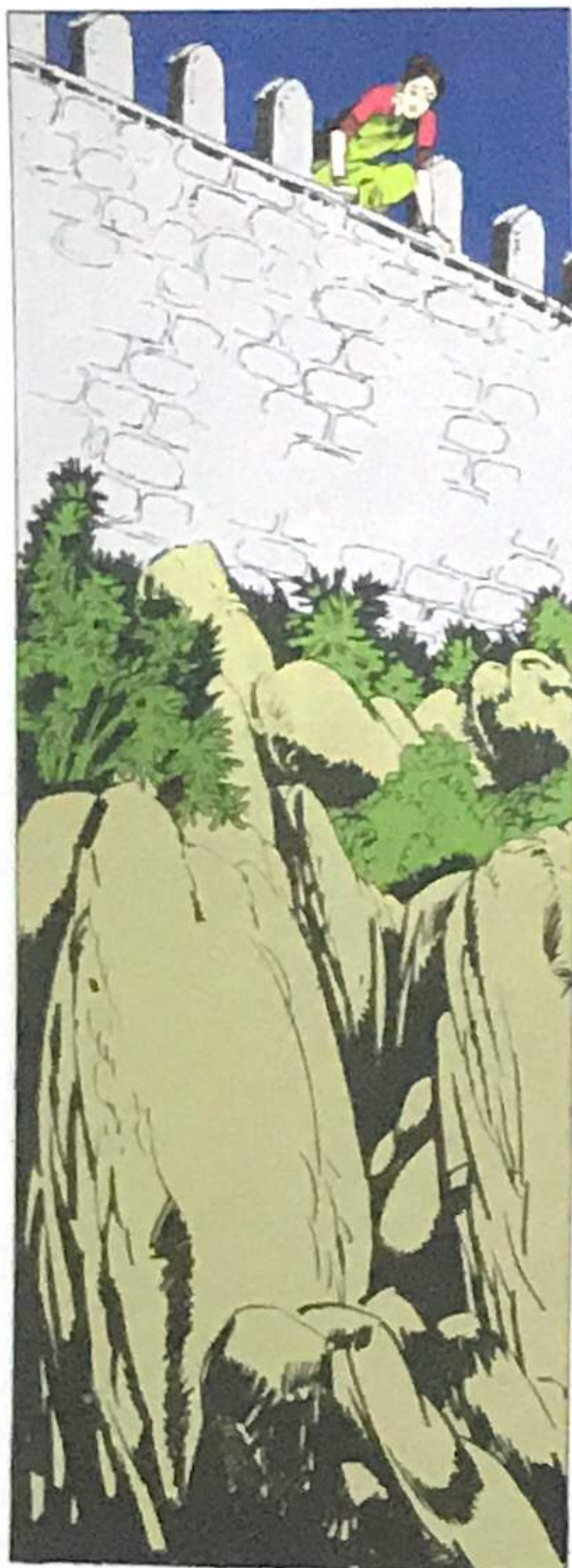
SHE HID HER EMPTY VESSEL IN THE BUSHES ...



...CLAMBERED UP THE WALL...



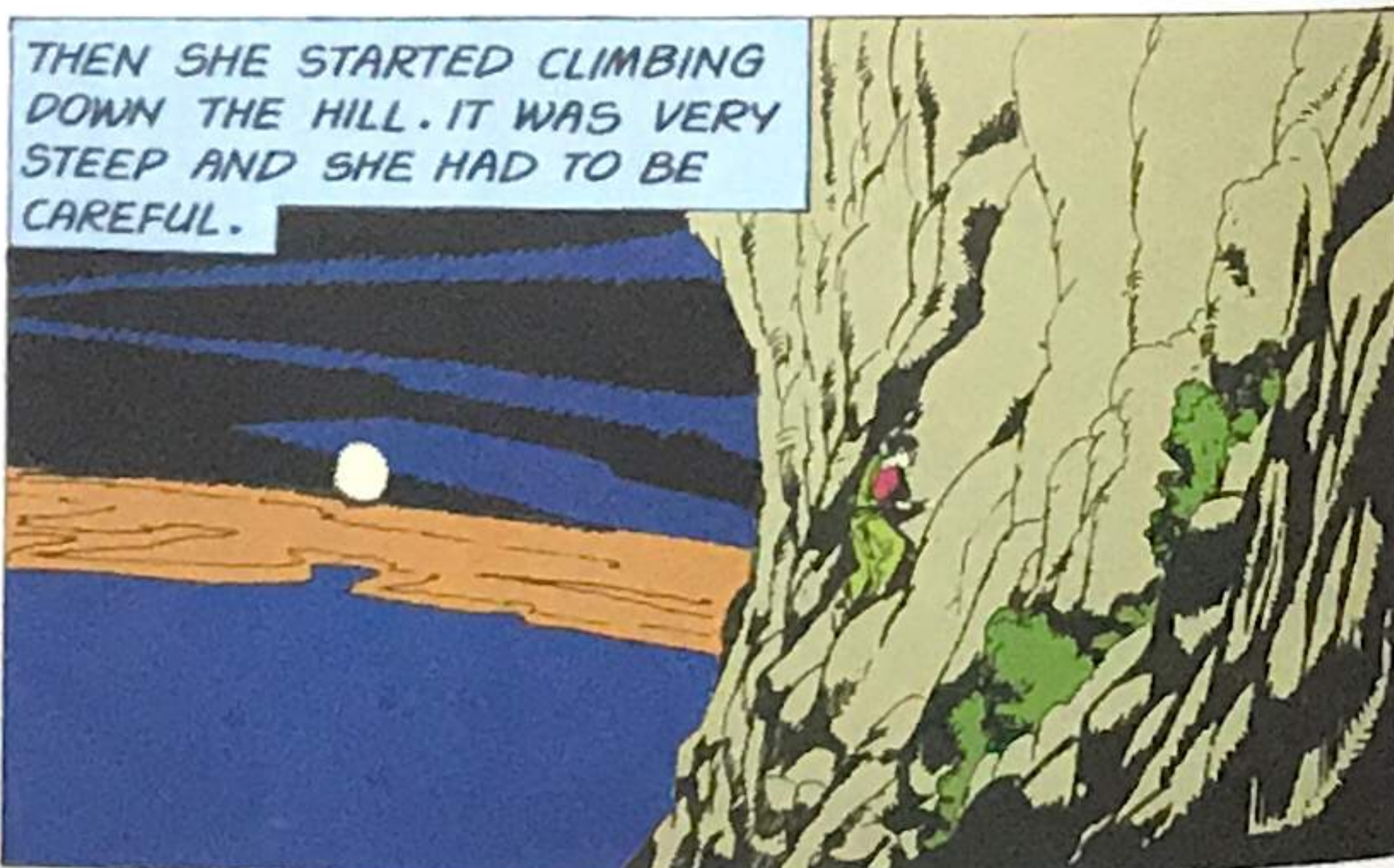
...AND SLITHERED DOWN TO THE OTHER SIDE.



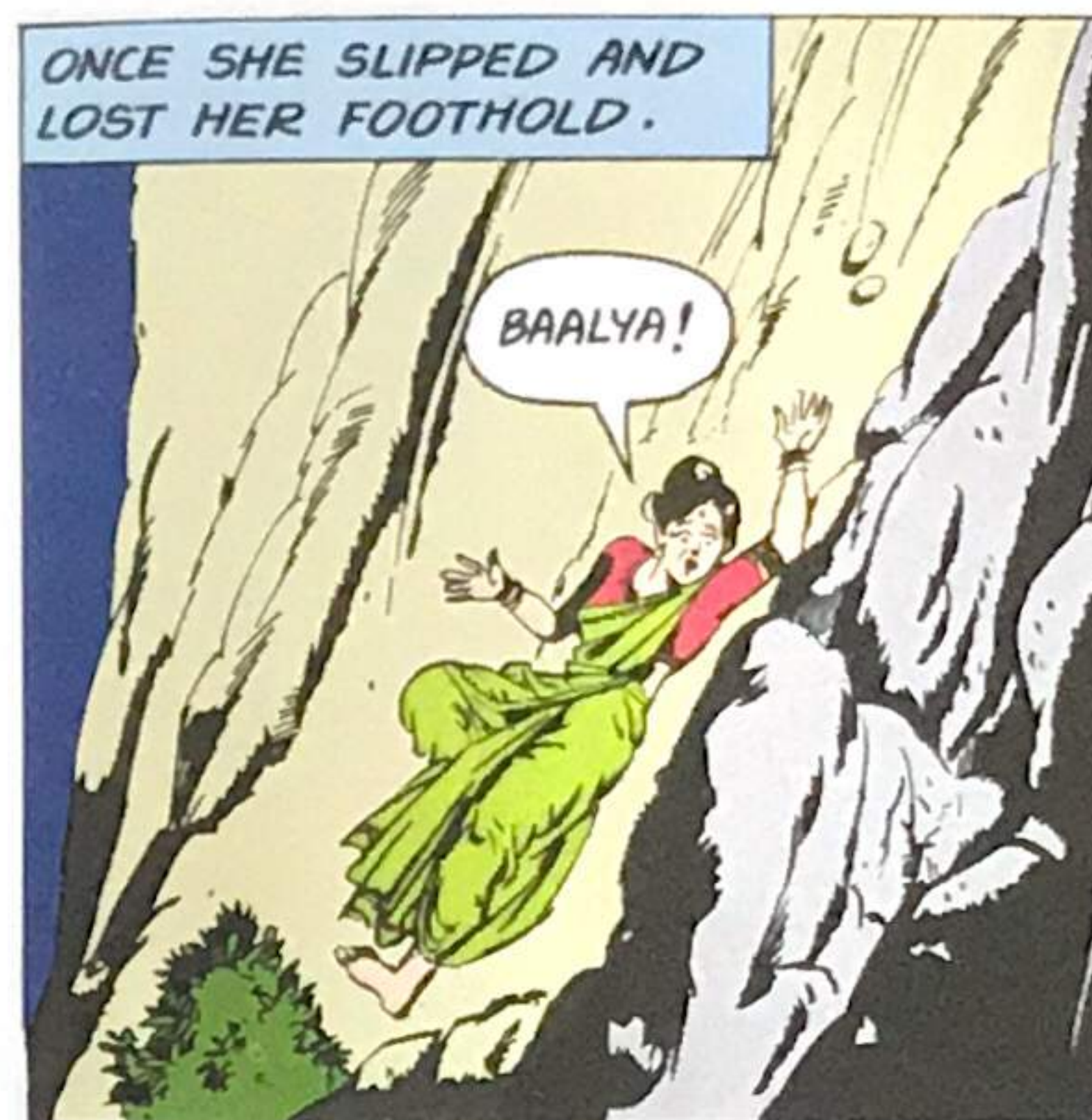
OUT AT LAST!



THEN SHE STARTED CLIMBING DOWN THE HILL. IT WAS VERY STEEP AND SHE HAD TO BE CAREFUL.



ONCE SHE SLIPPED AND LOST HER FOOTHOLD.



...AND STEADIED HERSELF.

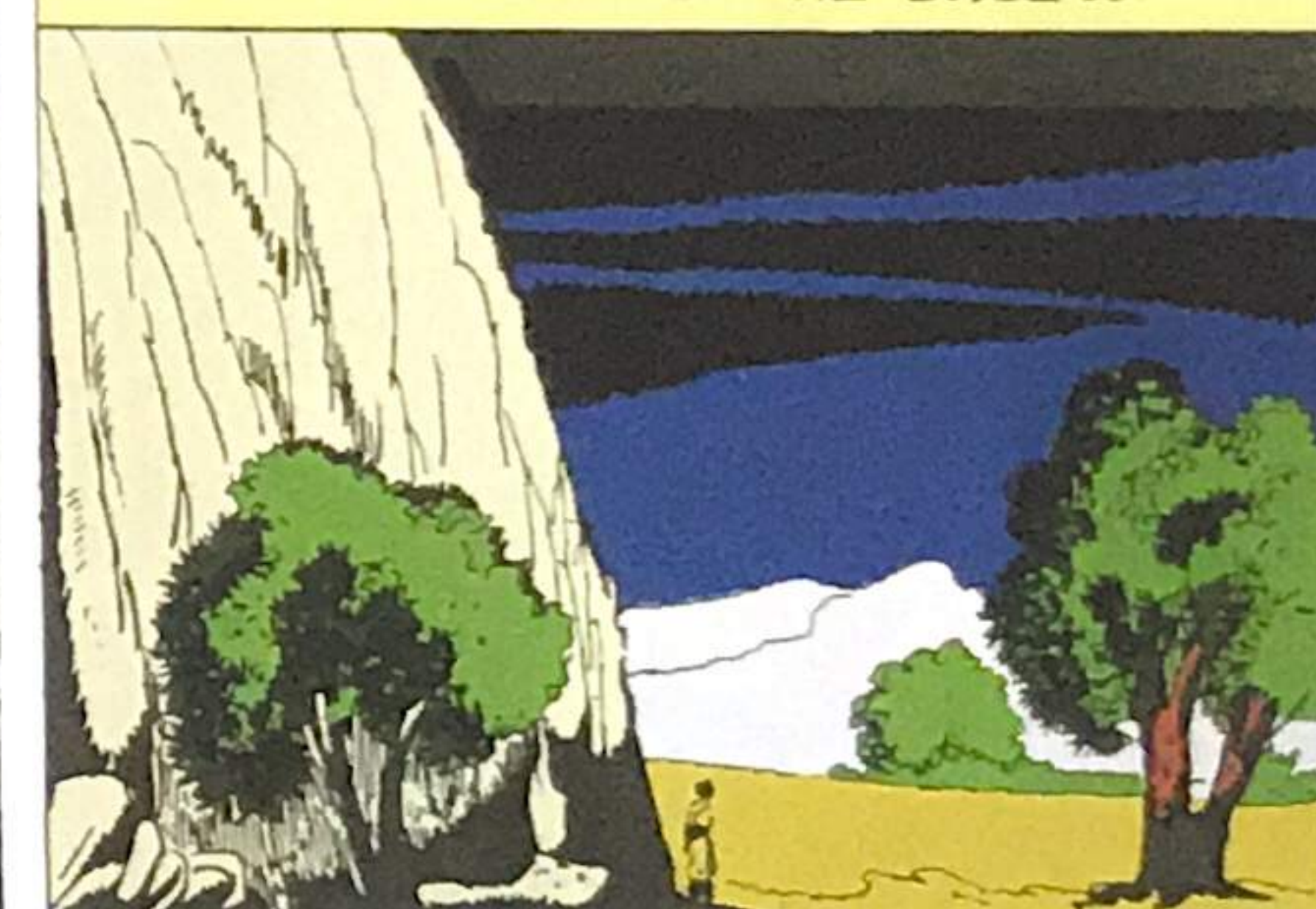
I'M COMING, BAALYA.



FORTUNATELY FOR HER THERE WAS A BUSH LOWER DOWN. SHE HUNG ON TO IT...



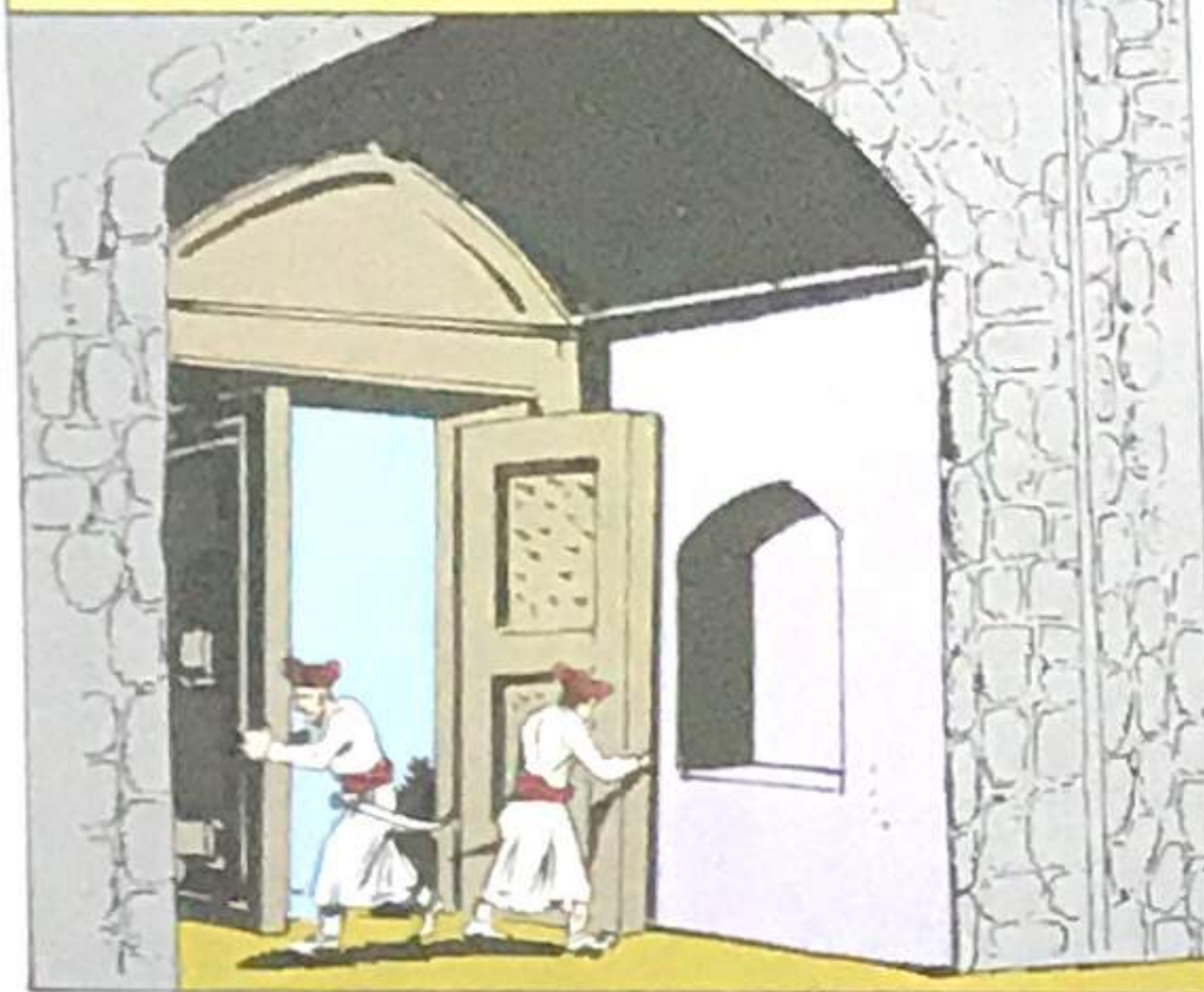
AT LAST SHE REACHED THE BASE...



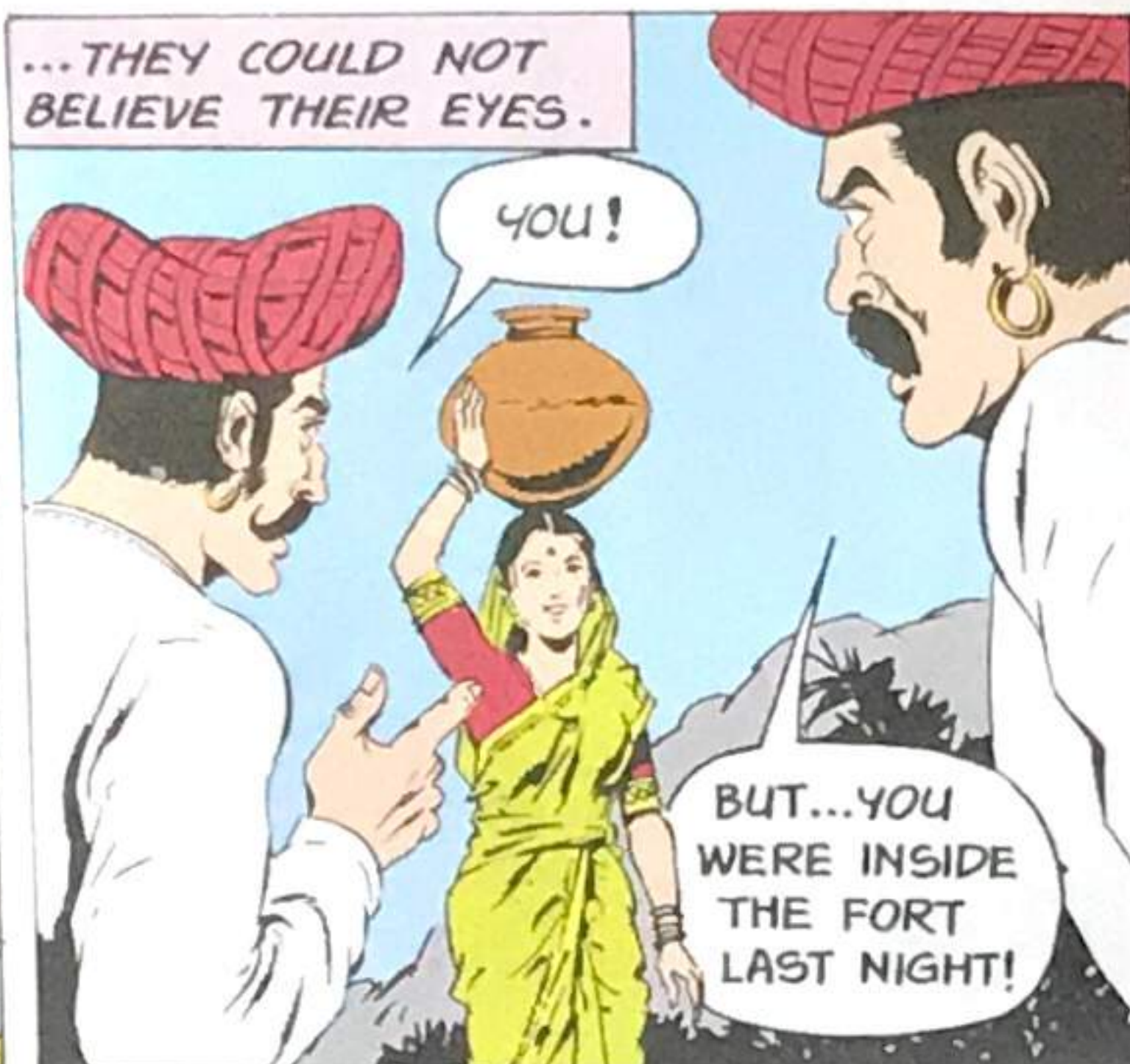
...AND RAN TOWARDS HER VILLAGE.



THE FOLLOWING MORNING WHEN THE GUARDS OPENED THE GATE...



...THEY COULD NOT BELIEVE THEIR EYES.



YOU!

BUT...YOU WERE INSIDE THE FORT LAST NIGHT!

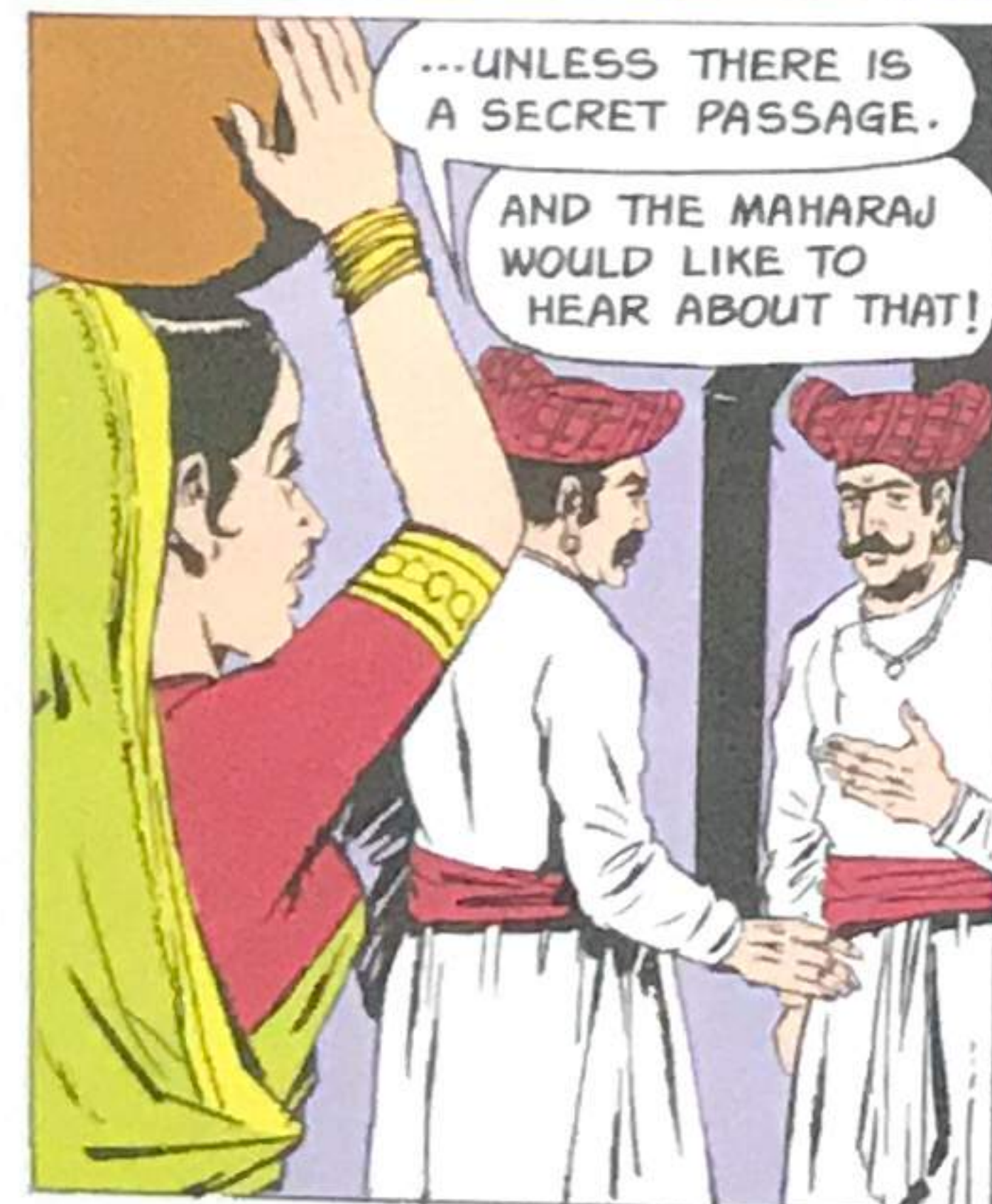


I WASN'T. I GOT OUT FROM THE EASTERN SIDE.



IMPOSSIBLE!

THIS IS THE ONLY WAY OUT OF THE FORT, UNLESS...



...UNLESS THERE IS A SECRET PASSAGE.

AND THE MAHARAJ WOULD LIKE TO HEAR ABOUT THAT!

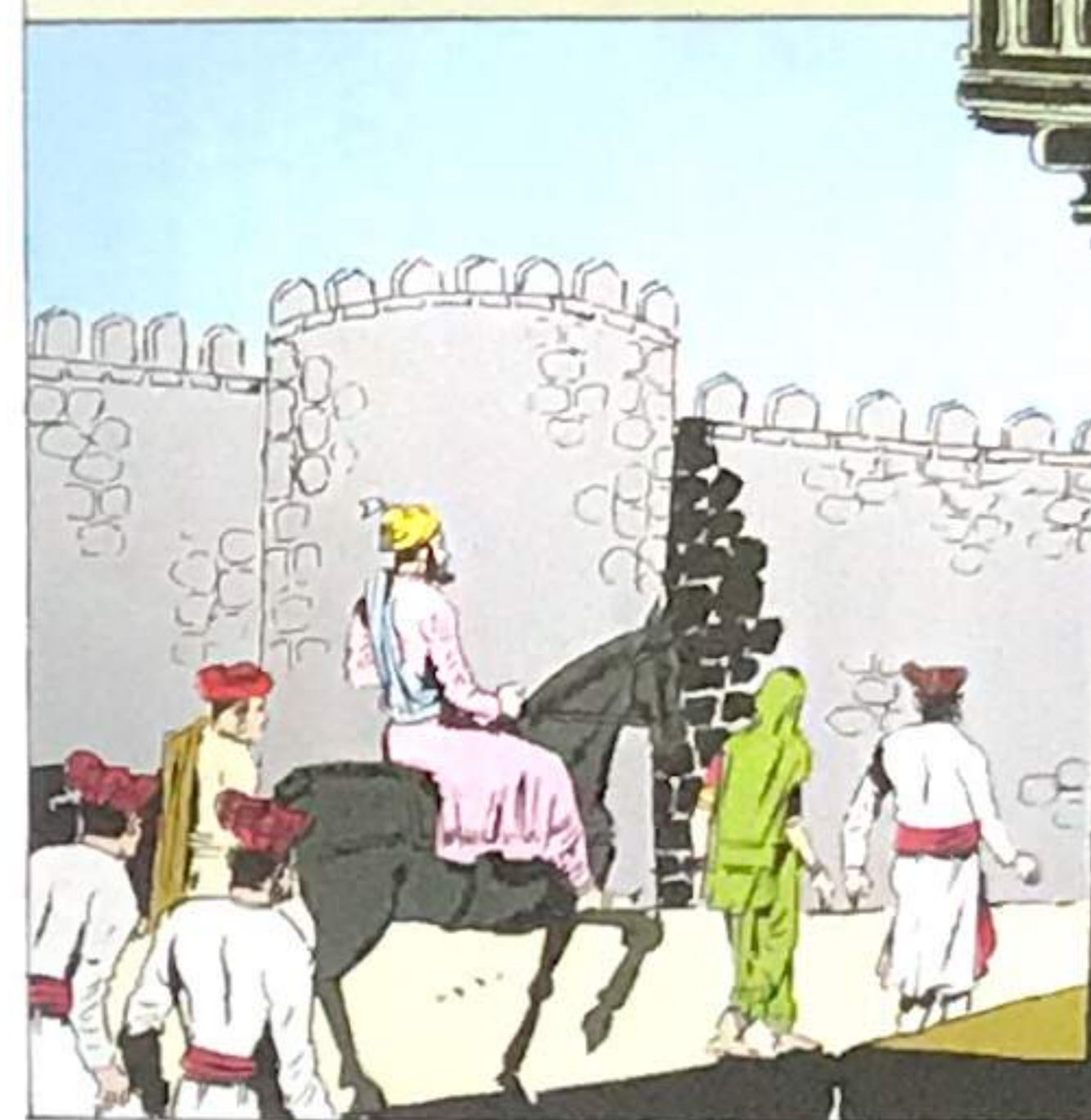


THE GUARDS MARCHED HIRA OFF TO SHIVAJI AND TOLD HIM EVERYTHING.

CAN YOU SHOW ME THE EXACT SPOT FROM WHERE YOU WENT DOWN THE HILL?

I CAN, MAHARAJ.

HIRA LED THE ROYAL PARTY TO THE EASTERN SIDE OF THE FORT.



HERE'S THE VESSEL I LEFT BEHIND, MAHARAJ.



SHIVAJI WALKED UP TO THE WALL.



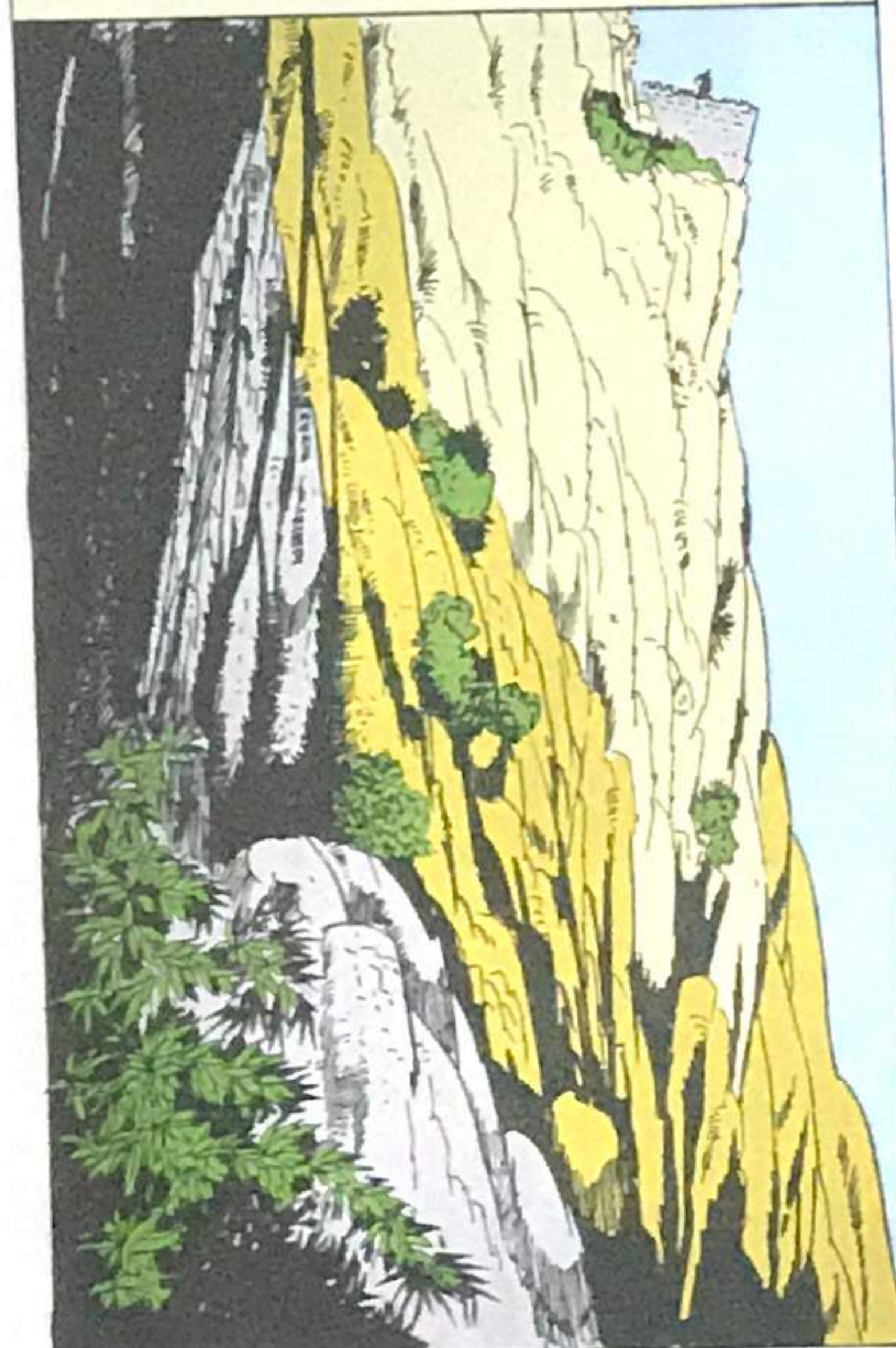
CAN YOU CLIMB DOWN NOW USING THE SAME ROUTE?



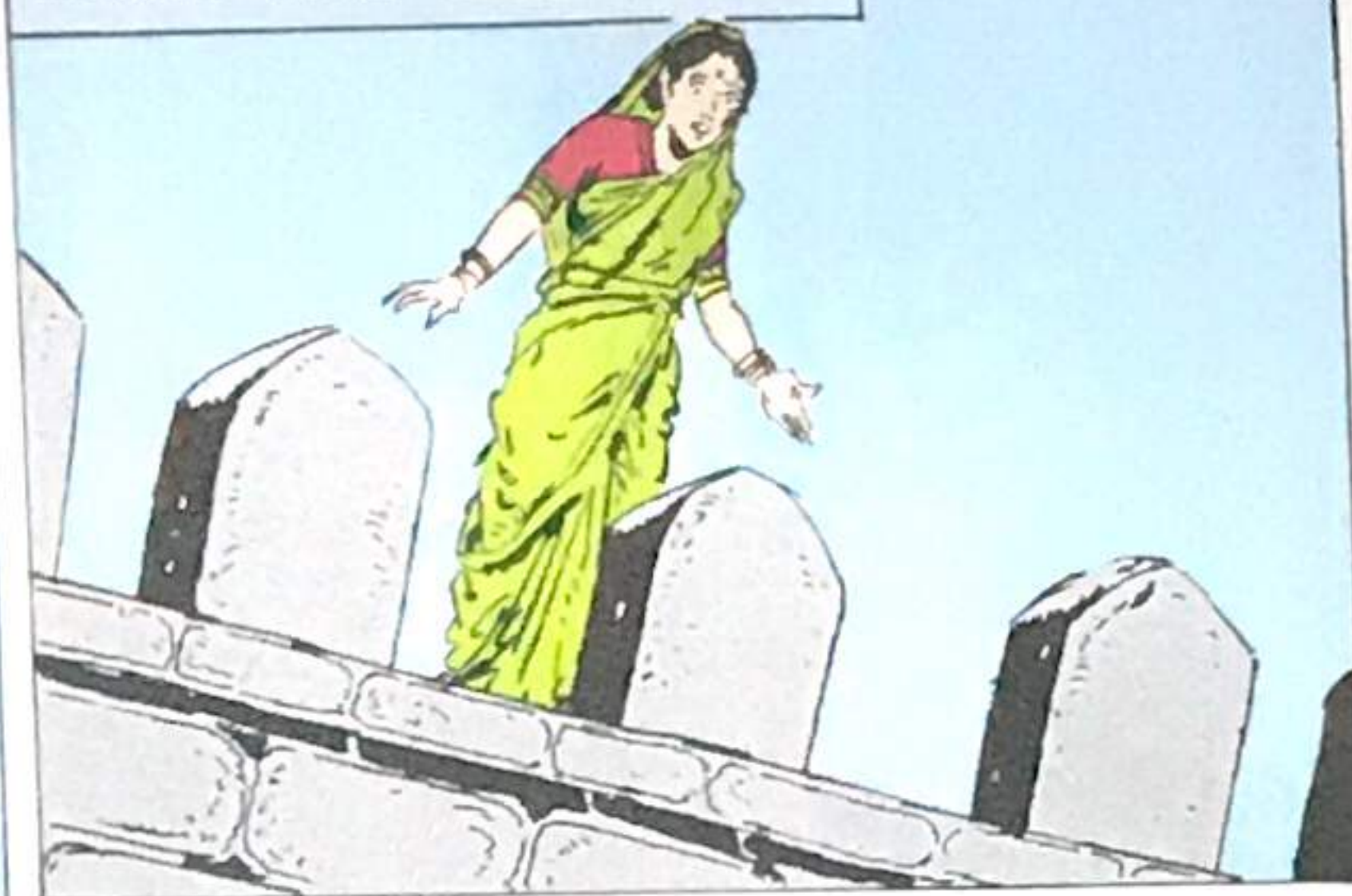
HIRA CLAMBERED UP THE WALL WITH EASE.



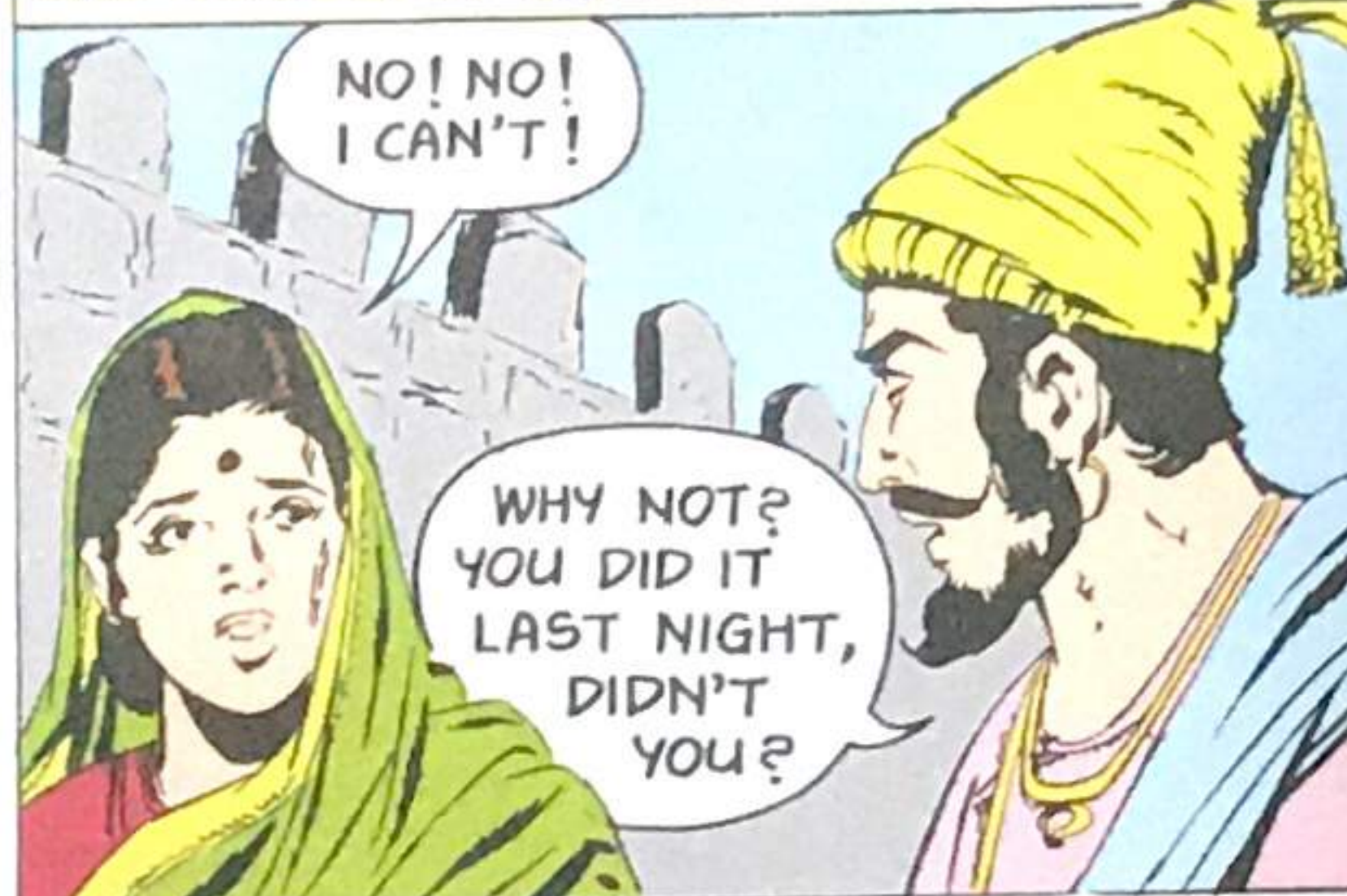
BUT WHEN SHE LOOKED DOWN...



...SHE WAS TERRIFIED.



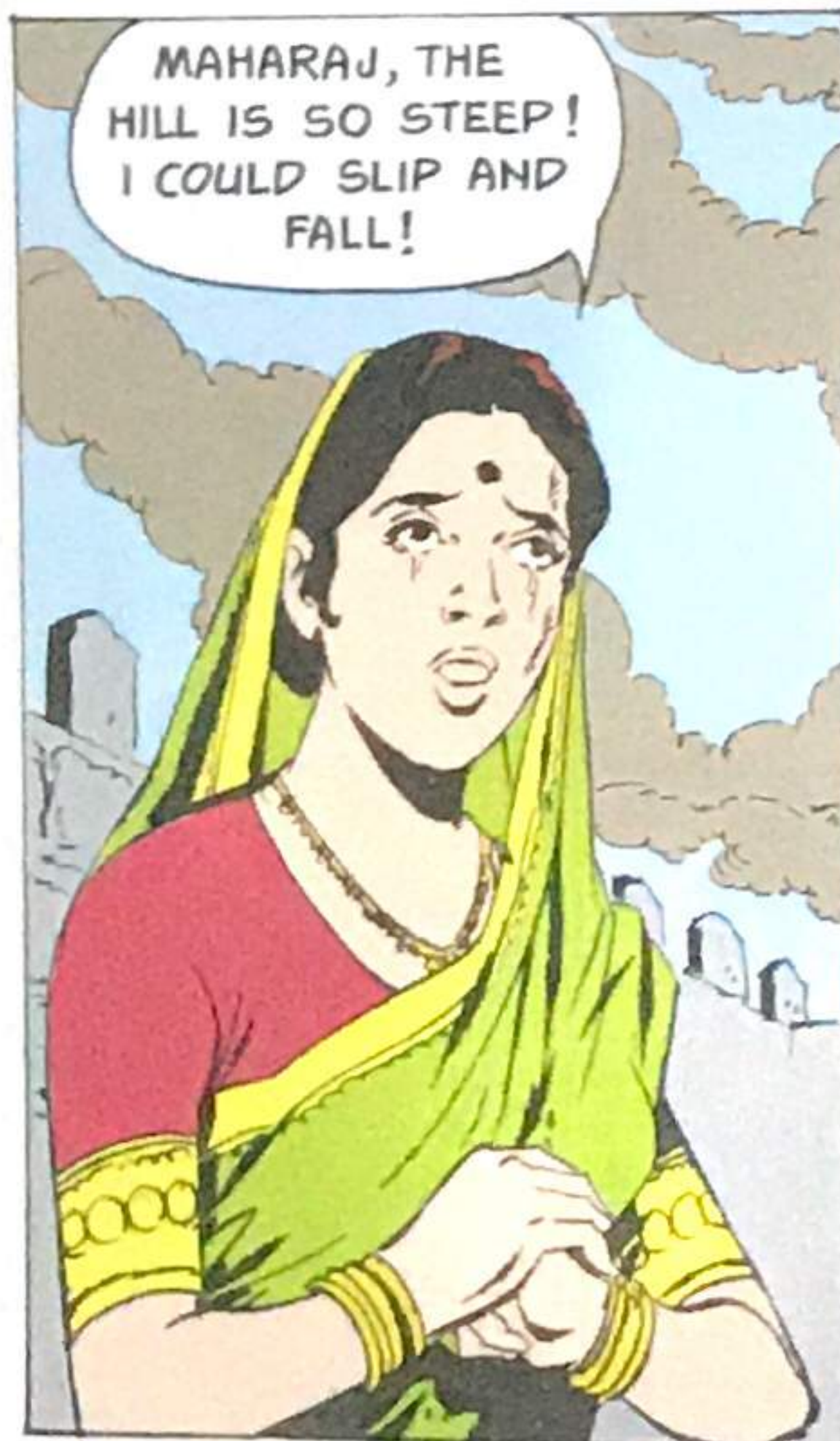
SHE HURRIEDLY CLIMBED DOWN THE WALL.



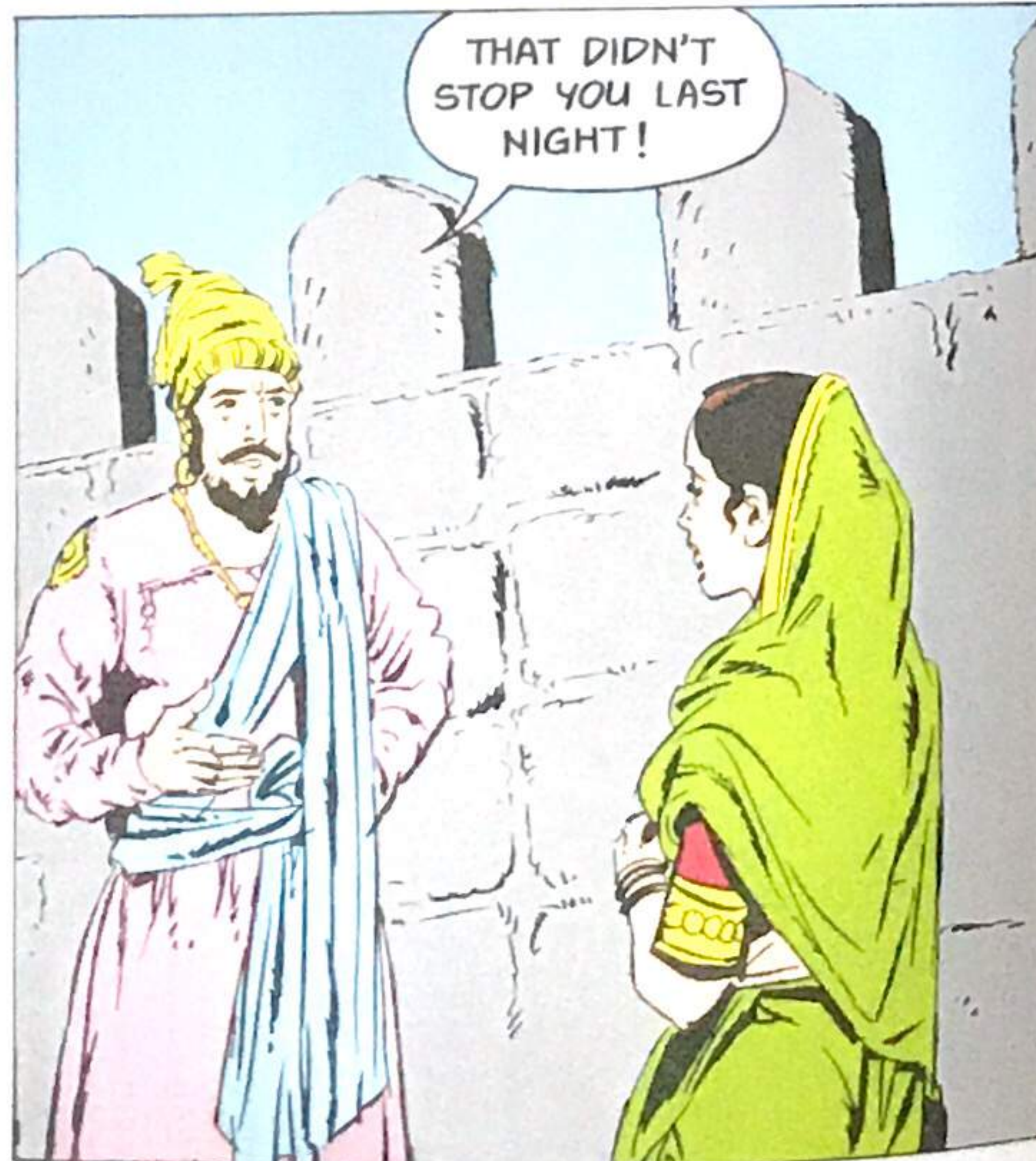
NO! NO!
I CAN'T!

WHY NOT?
YOU DID IT
LAST NIGHT,
DIDN'T YOU?

MAHARAJ, THE
HILL IS SO STEEP!
I COULD SLIP AND
FALL!



THAT DIDN'T
STOP YOU LAST
NIGHT!



BECAUSE... BECAUSE...
I WAS THINKING ONLY OF MY
CHILD, MAHARAJ. HE WOULD BE
WAITING FOR ME...



I BELIEVE YOU, HIRA. YOU ARE
A BRAVE WOMAN! A BRAVE
MOTHER! YOU DESERVE
A REWARD.

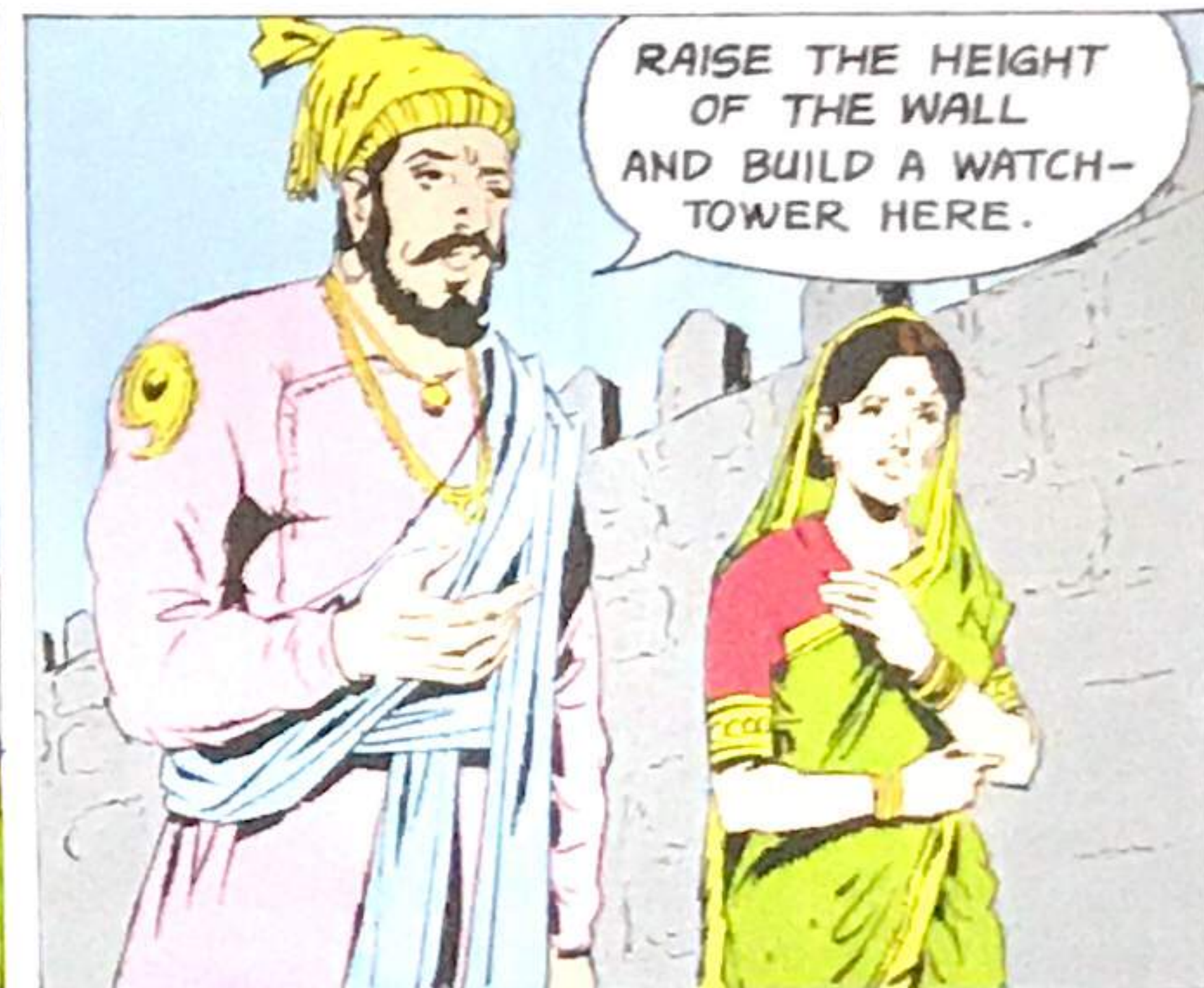


SHIVAJI THEN TURNED TO HIS
MINISTER.



HIRA HAS DONE
US A GREAT SERVICE.
ENEMIES COULD GET
IN, THE WAY HIRA
GOT OUT.

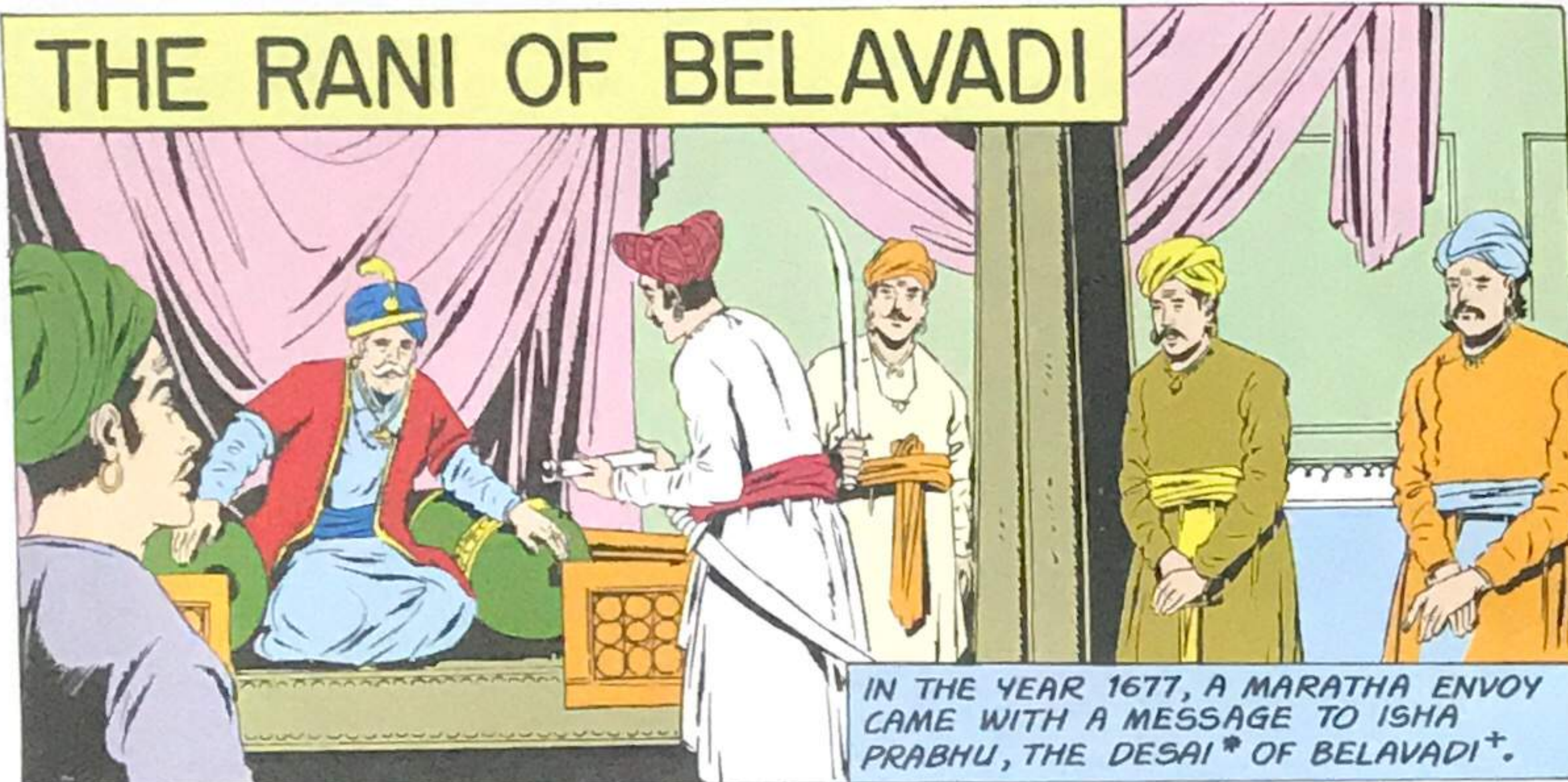
RAISE THE HEIGHT
OF THE WALL
AND BUILD A WATCH-
TOWER HERE.



SHIVAJI AND HIRA ARE NO LONGER
ALIVE. BUT HIRA BURZ—THE WATCH-
TOWER BUILT BY SHIVAJI AND
NAMED AFTER HIRA—CAN BE
SEEN IN RAIGADH TO THIS DAY.



THE RANI OF BELAVADI



IN THE YEAR 1677, A MARATHA ENVOY CAME WITH A MESSAGE TO ISHA PRABHU, THE DESAI* OF BELAVADI†.

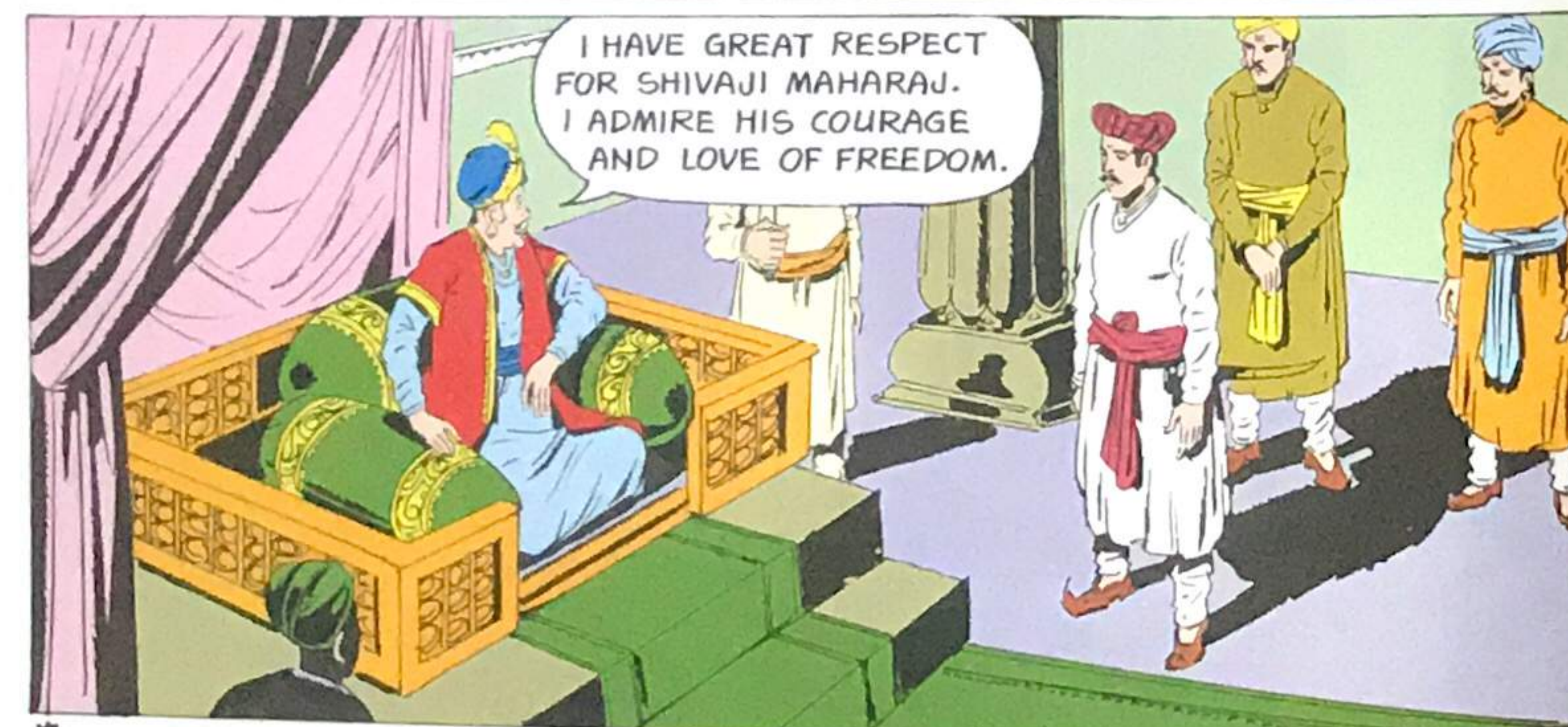
THE MESSAGE WAS FROM DADAJI RAGHUNATH NEDKAR, ONE OF SHIVAJI'S MOST ABLE COMMANDERS.



SWEAR ALLEGIANCE TO SHIVAJI IN EXCHANGE FOR HIS PROTECTION? NEVER!



I HAVE GREAT RESPECT FOR SHIVAJI MAHARAJ. I ADMIRE HIS COURAGE AND LOVE OF FREEDOM.



* FEUDAL CHIEFTAIN † IN BELGAUM DISTRICT



BUT I ALSO SHARE HIS LOVE OF FREEDOM.

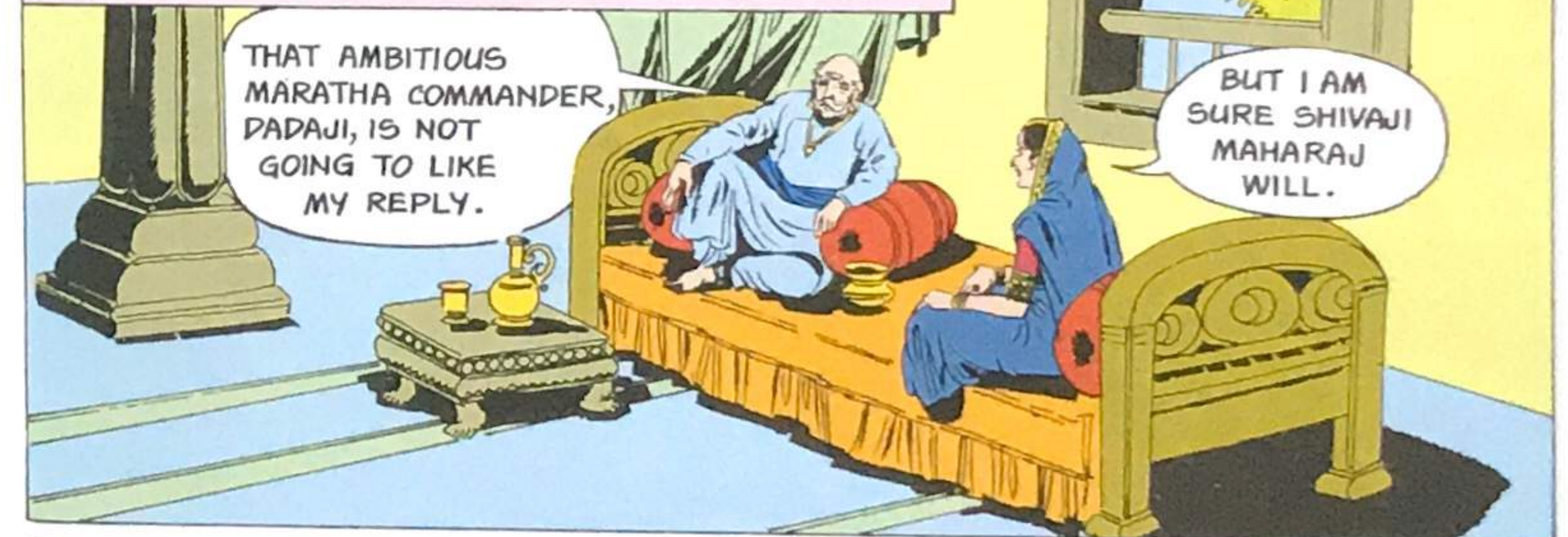


DOES IT MEAN...

YES. IT MEANS I WANT TO REMAIN FREE.

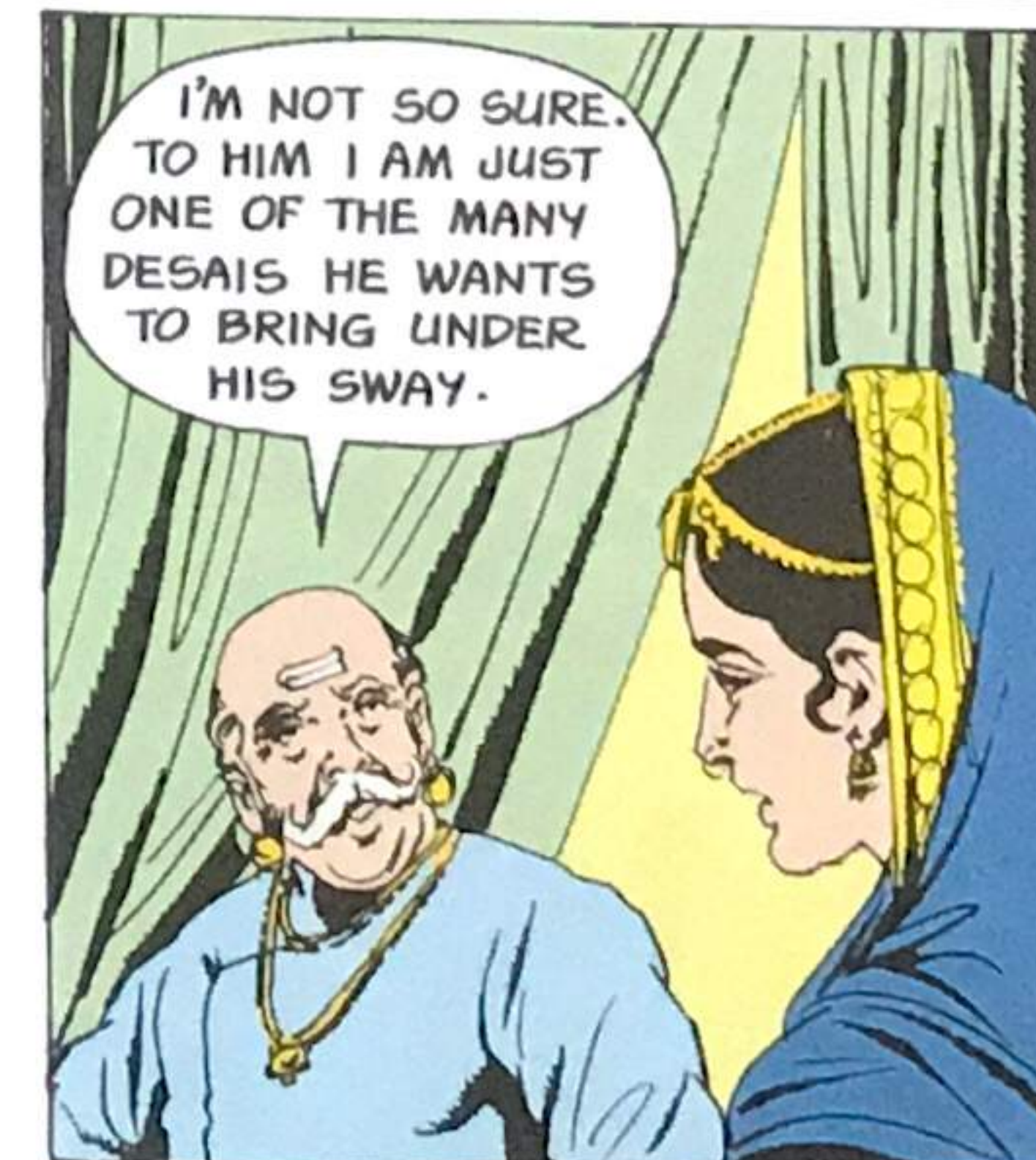
THE ENVOY LEFT FOR THE MARATHA CAMP.

LATER, WHEN ISHA PRABHU DISCUSSED THE DAY'S HAPPENINGS WITH HIS WIFE, MALLAMMA*—



THAT AMBITIOUS MARATHA COMMANDER, DADAJI, IS NOT GOING TO LIKE MY REPLY.

BUT I AM SURE SHIVAJI MAHARAJ WILL.



I'M NOT SO SURE. TO HIM I AM JUST ONE OF THE MANY DESAIS HE WANTS TO BRING UNDER HIS SWAY.



WOULD THAT MEAN WAR?

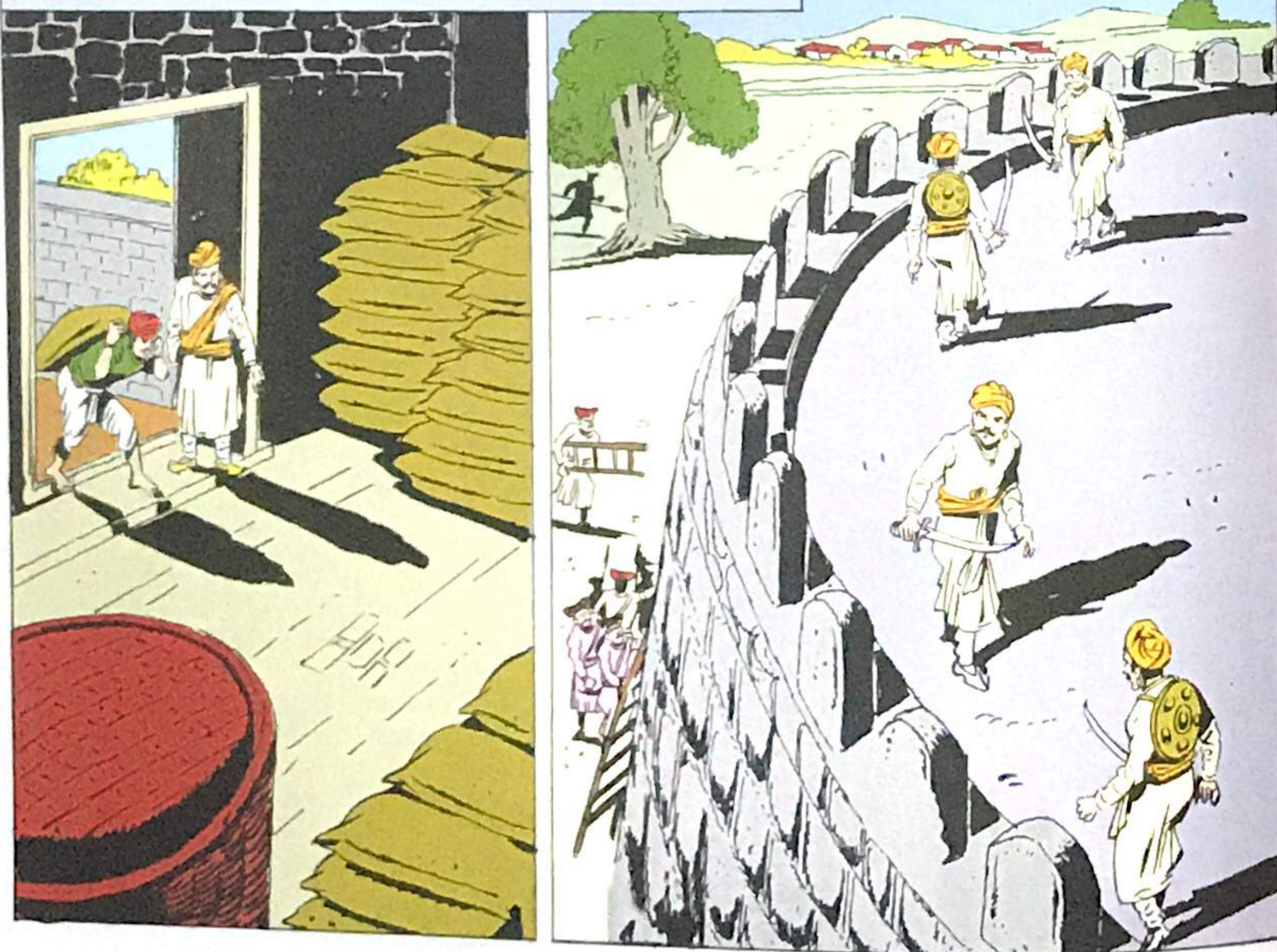
YES, WAR AND BLOODSHED.

* ALSO KNOW BY THE NAME SAVITRIBAI

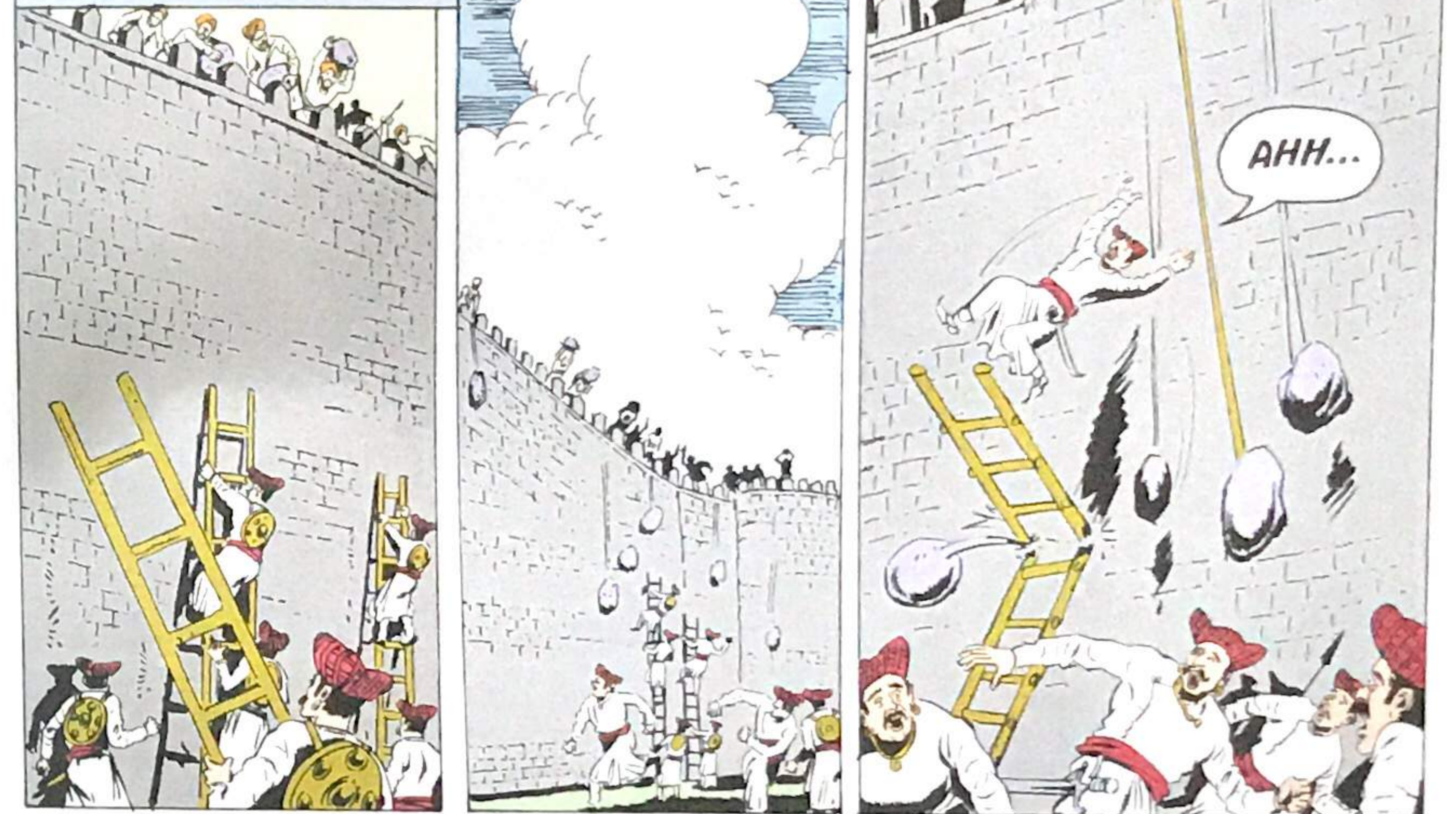
AS EXPECTED, DADAJI LAID SIEGE TO BELAVADI. MARATHA SOLDIERS SURROUNDED THE FORT.



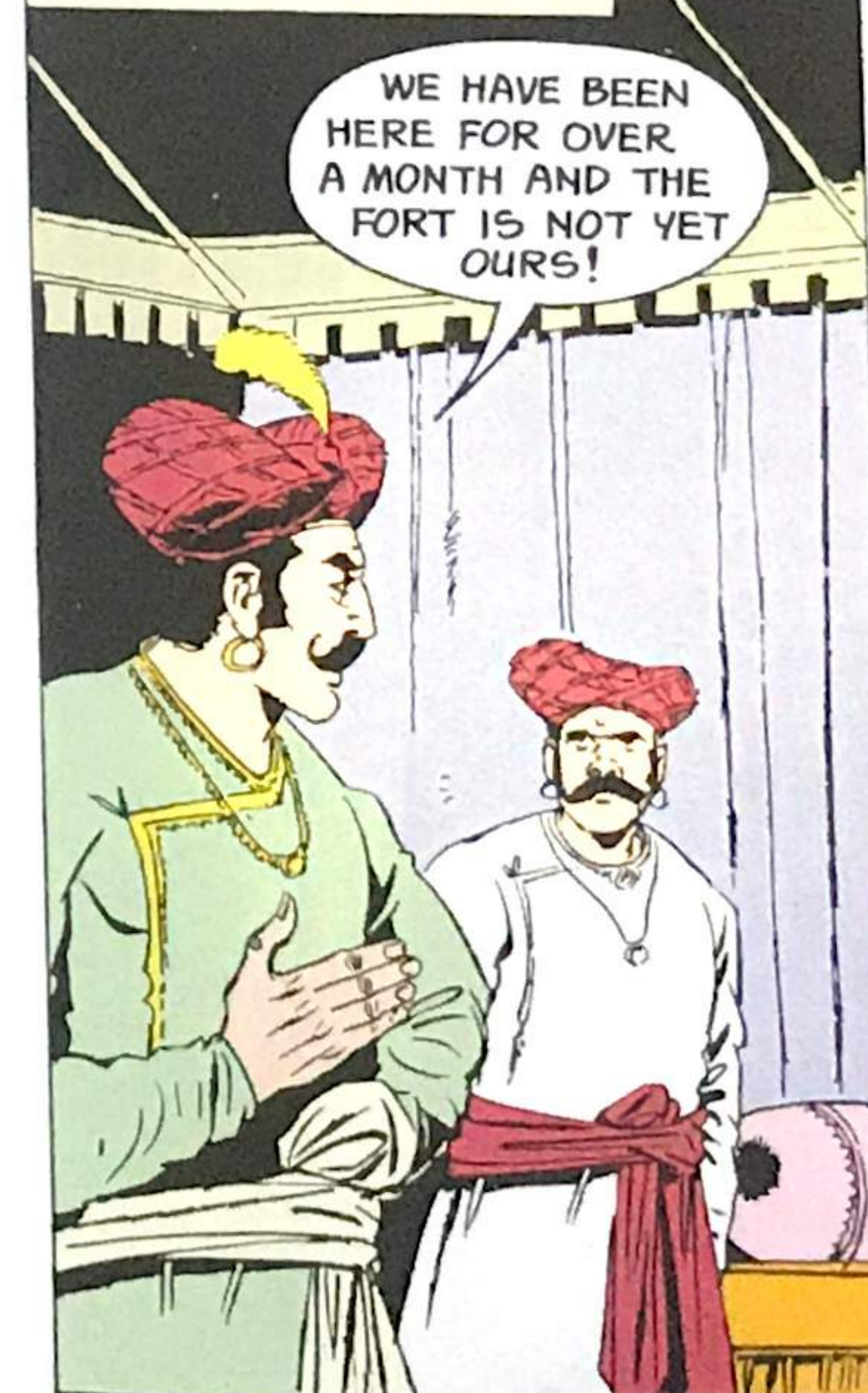
BUT ISHA PRABHU WAS PREPARED FOR A SIEGE.



EVERY ATTEMPT OF THE ENEMY TO SCALE THE FORT WAS FOILED.

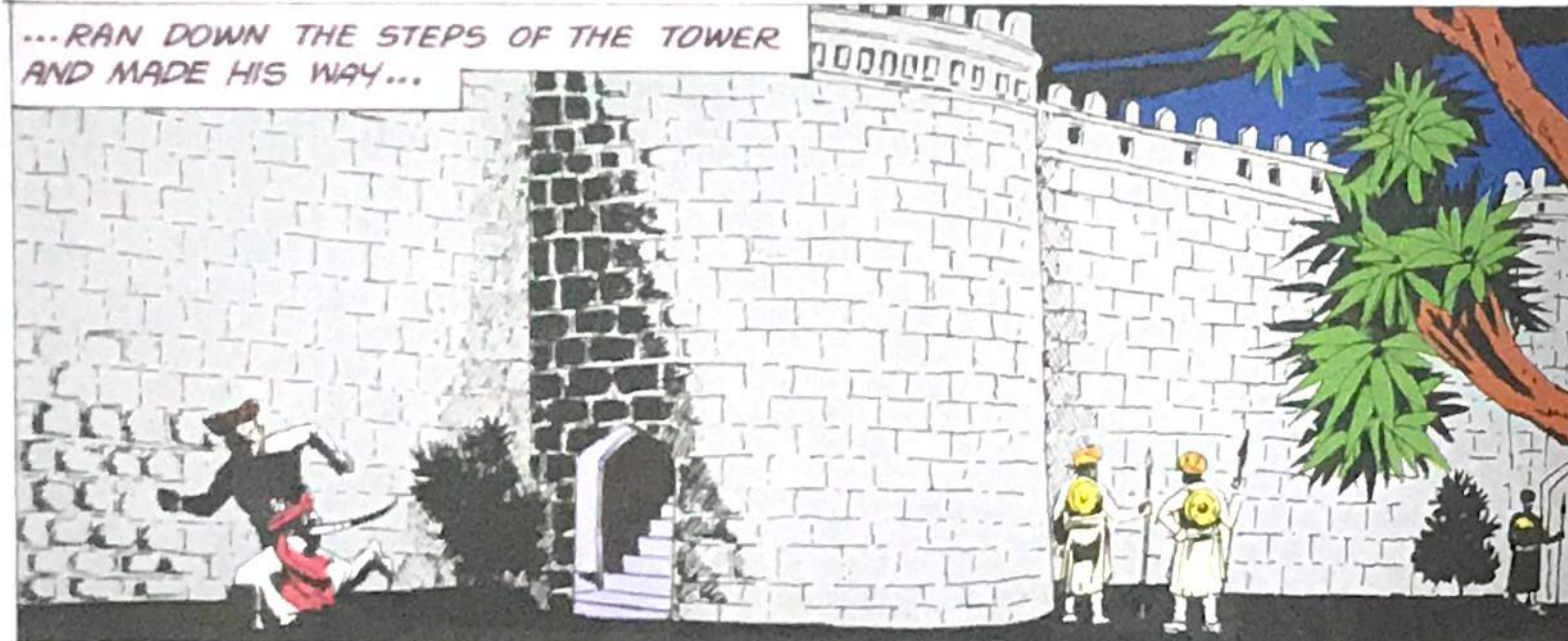


DADAJI WAS WORRIED.





...RAN DOWN THE STEPS OF THE TOWER AND MADE HIS WAY...



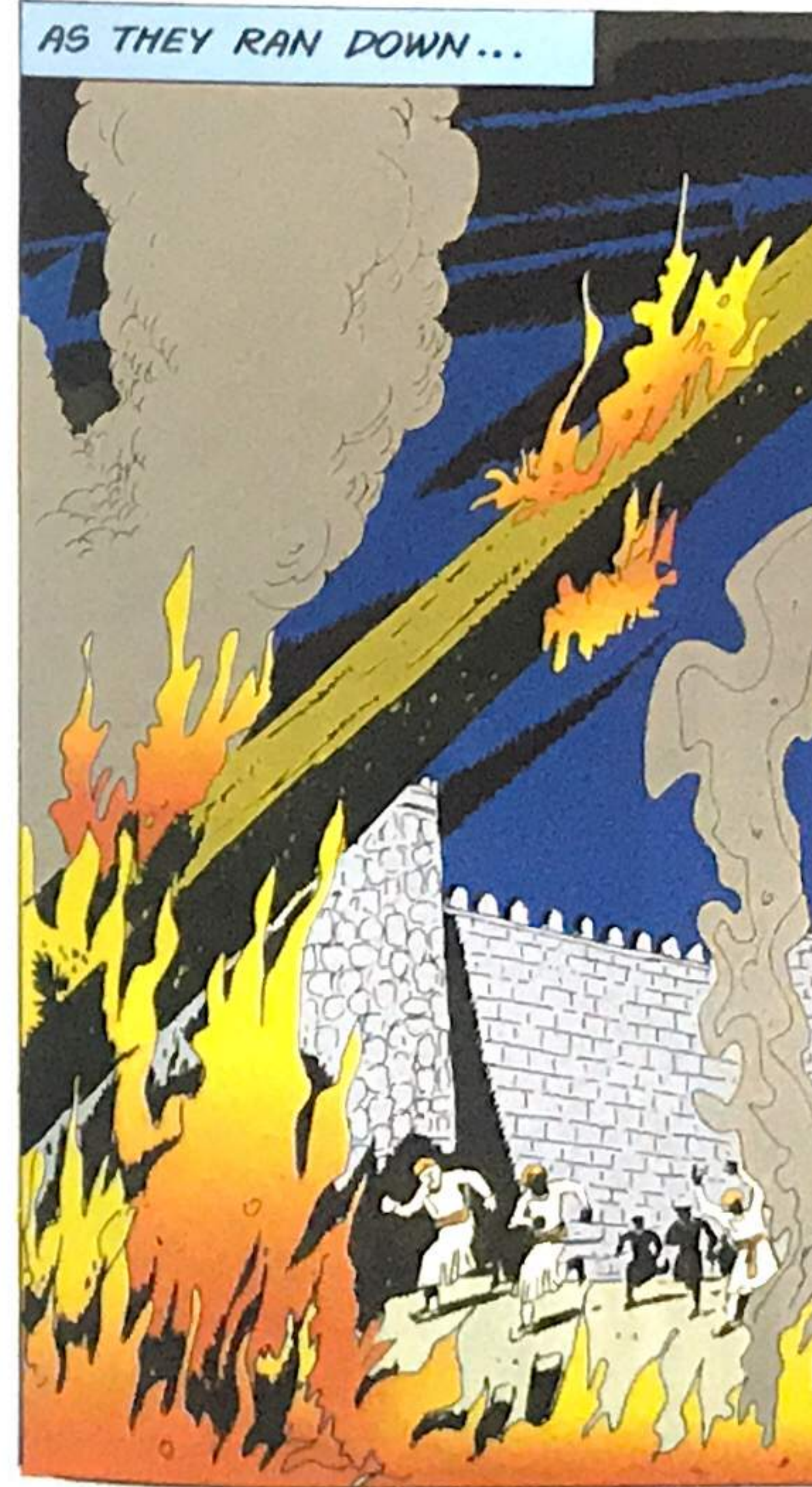
...TO THE PLACE WHERE THE HAY FOR THE HORSES WAS STACKED.



THE FIRST TO NOTICE THE FIRE WERE THE GUARDS ON THE RAMPART.



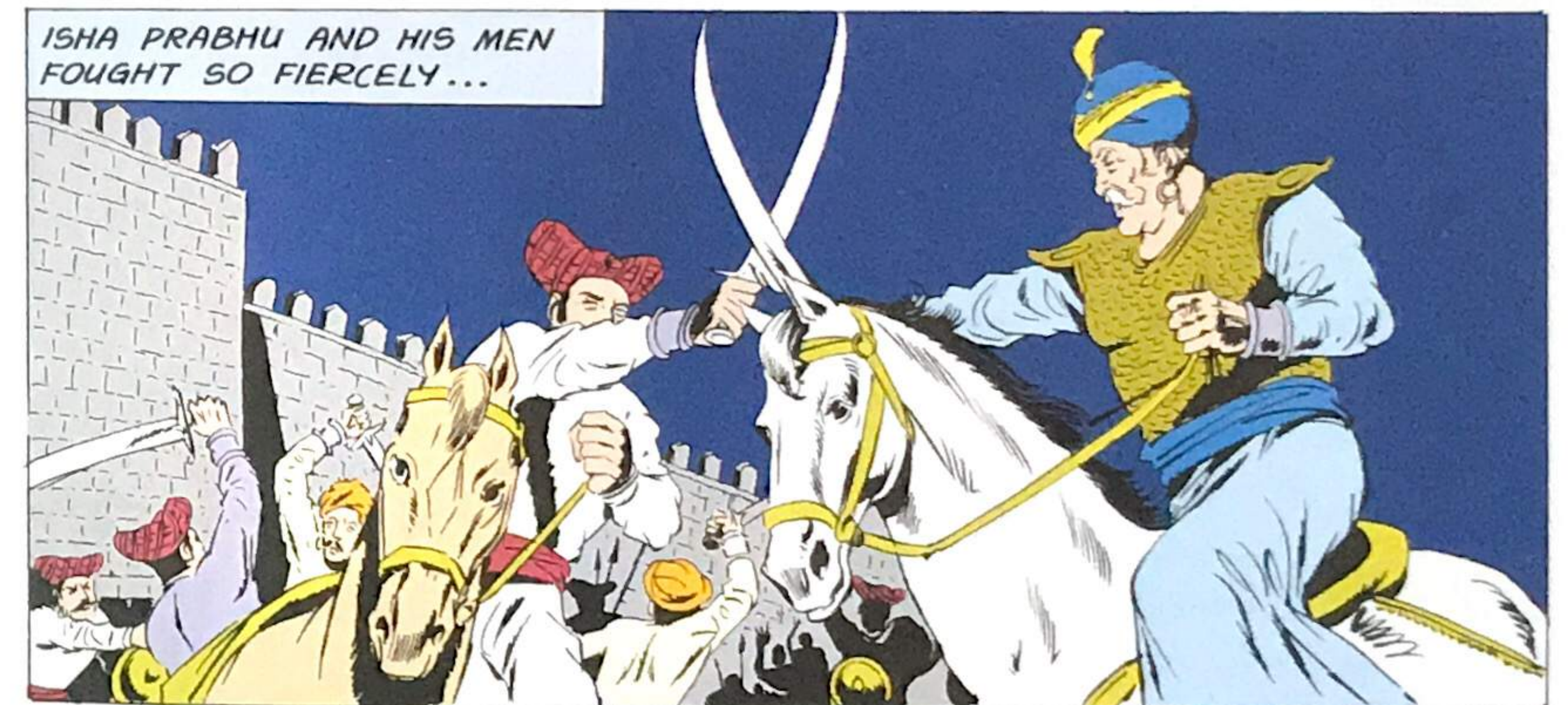
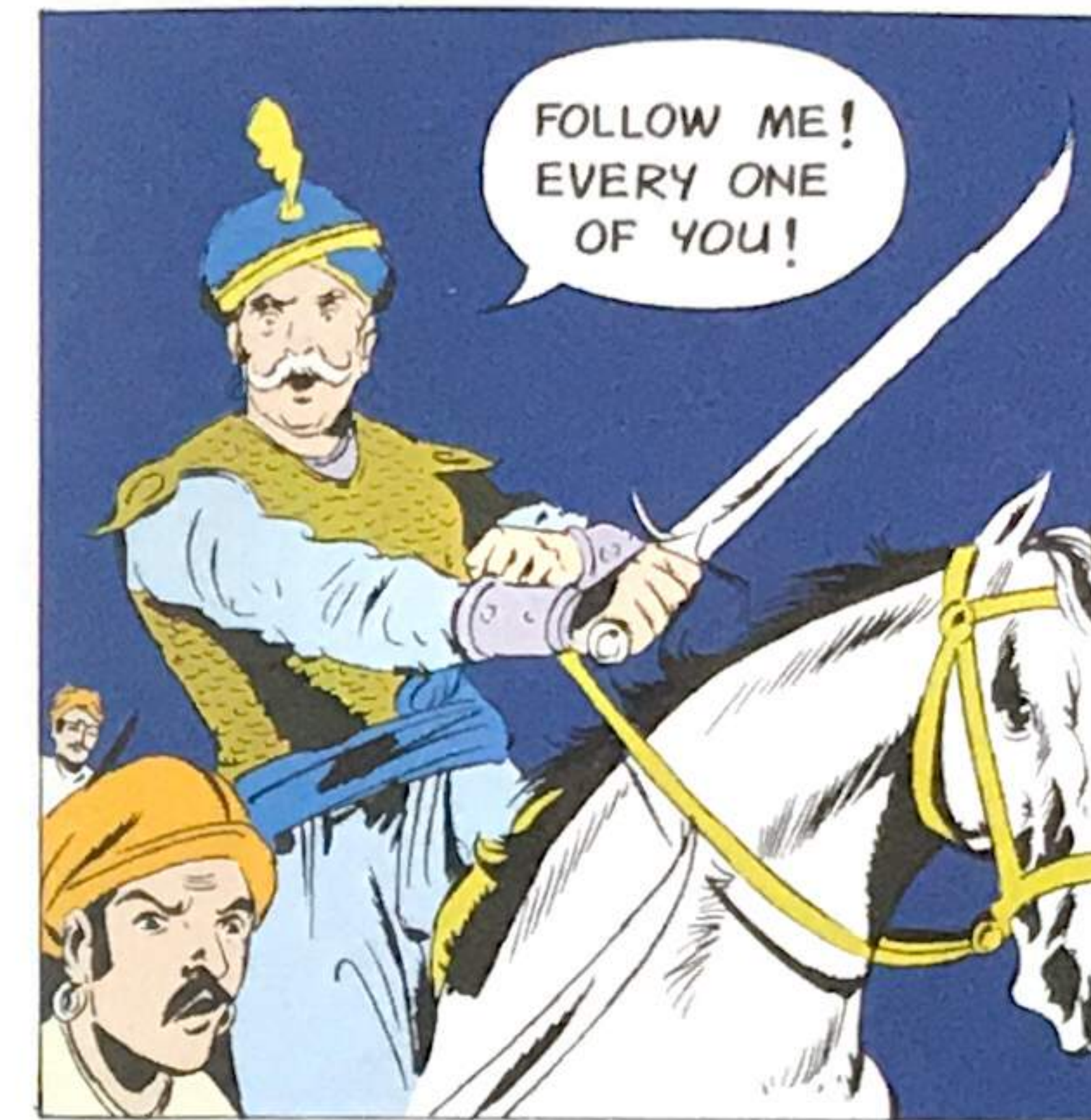
AS THEY RAN DOWN...



...THE MARATHA RAN TOWARDS THE GATES OF THE FORT.



SOON THE DESAI ARRIVED ON THE SCENE.



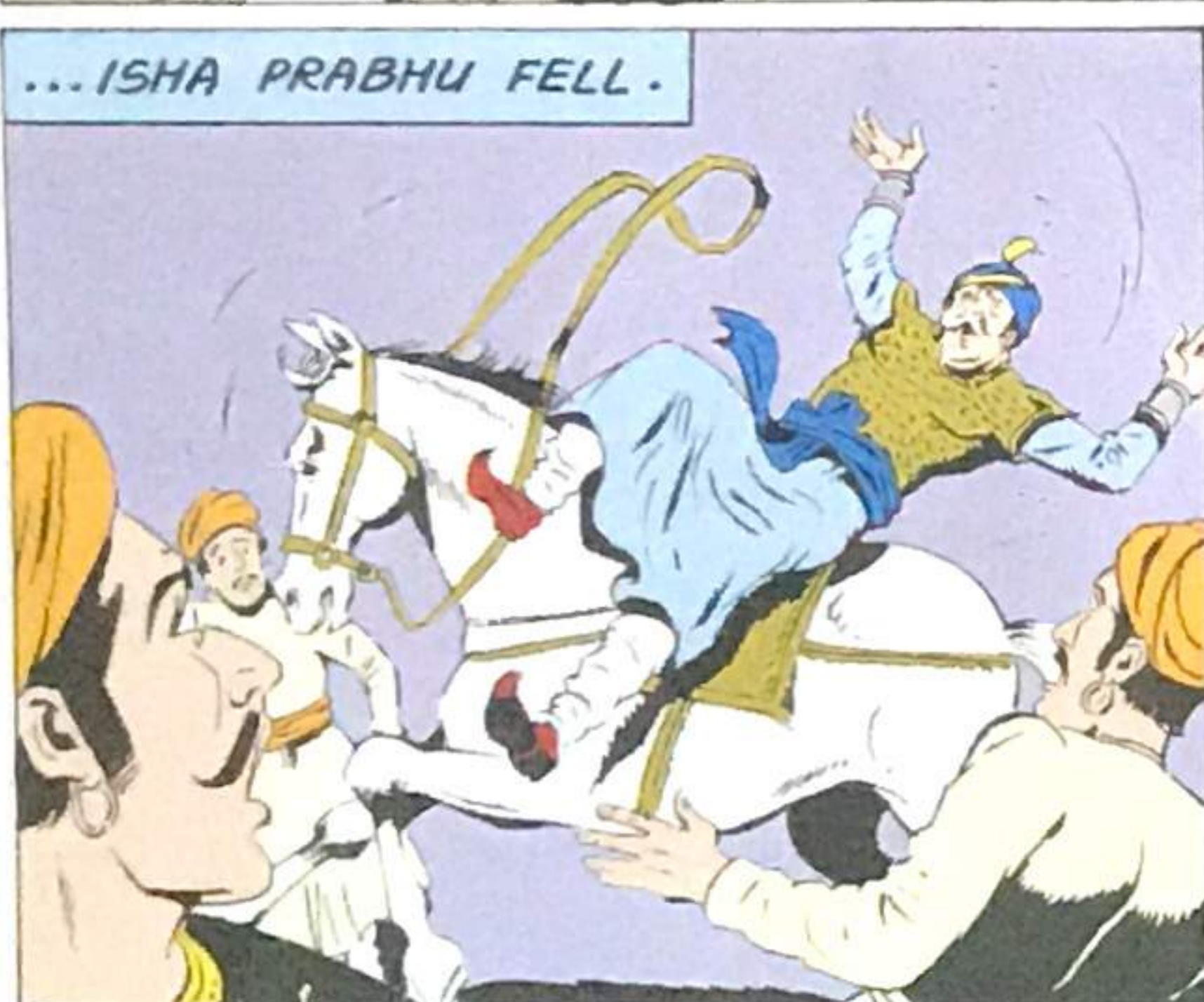
...TILL THE MARATHAS WERE
DRIVEN OUT OF THE FORT.



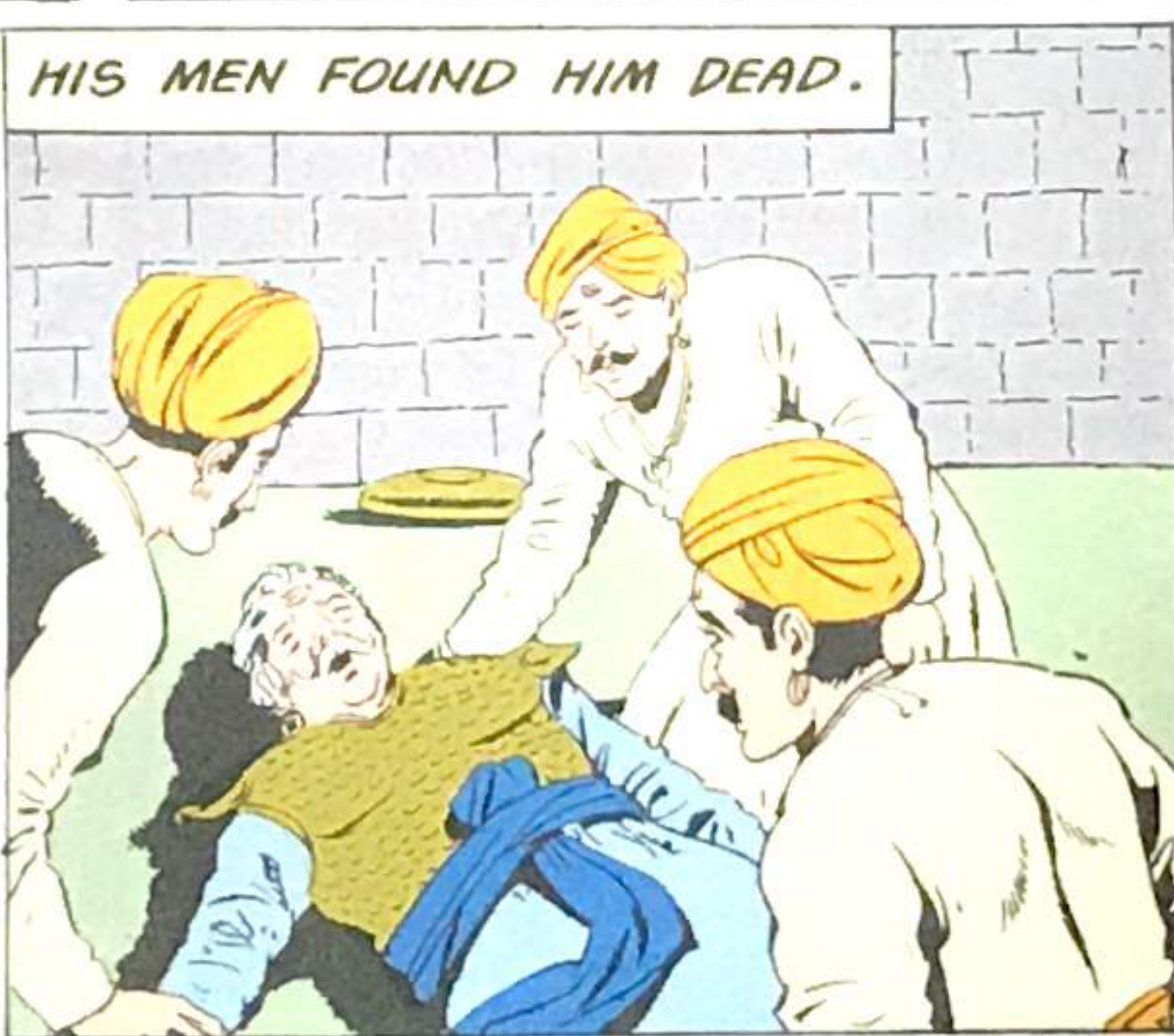
EVEN AS THE GATES WERE
CLOSED ...



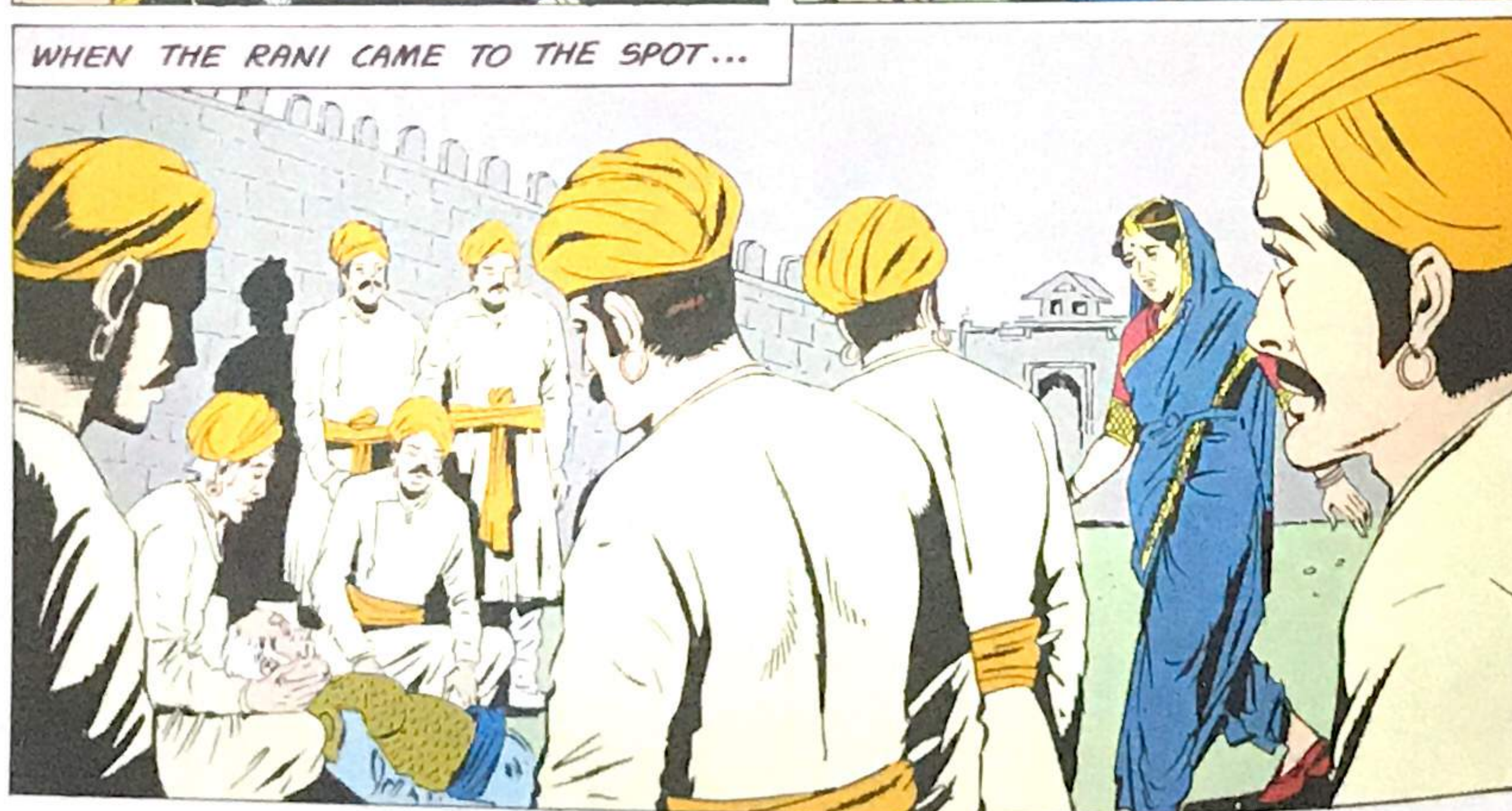
...ISHA PRABHU FELL.



HIS MEN FOUND HIM DEAD.



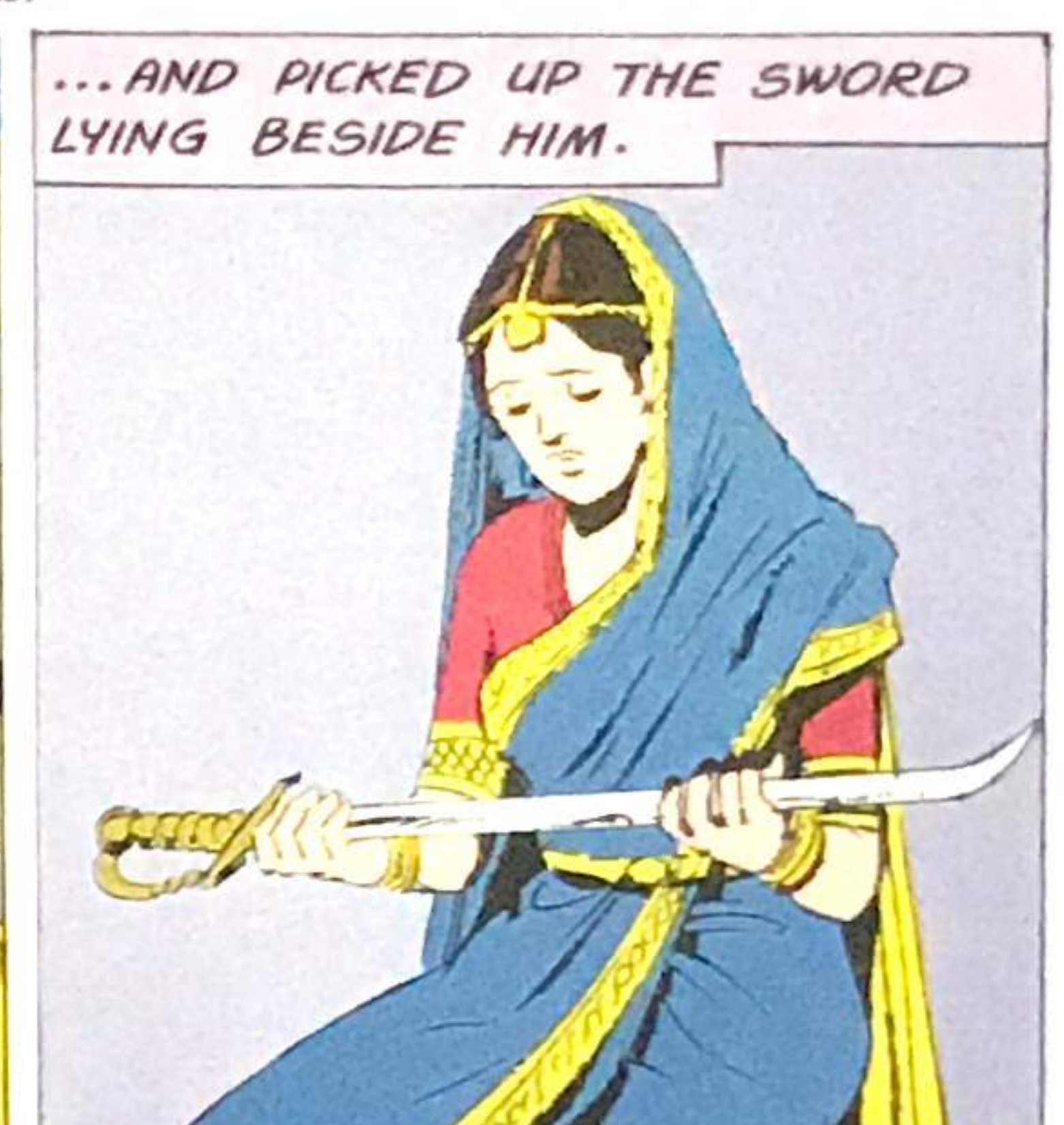
WHEN THE RANI CAME TO THE SPOT...



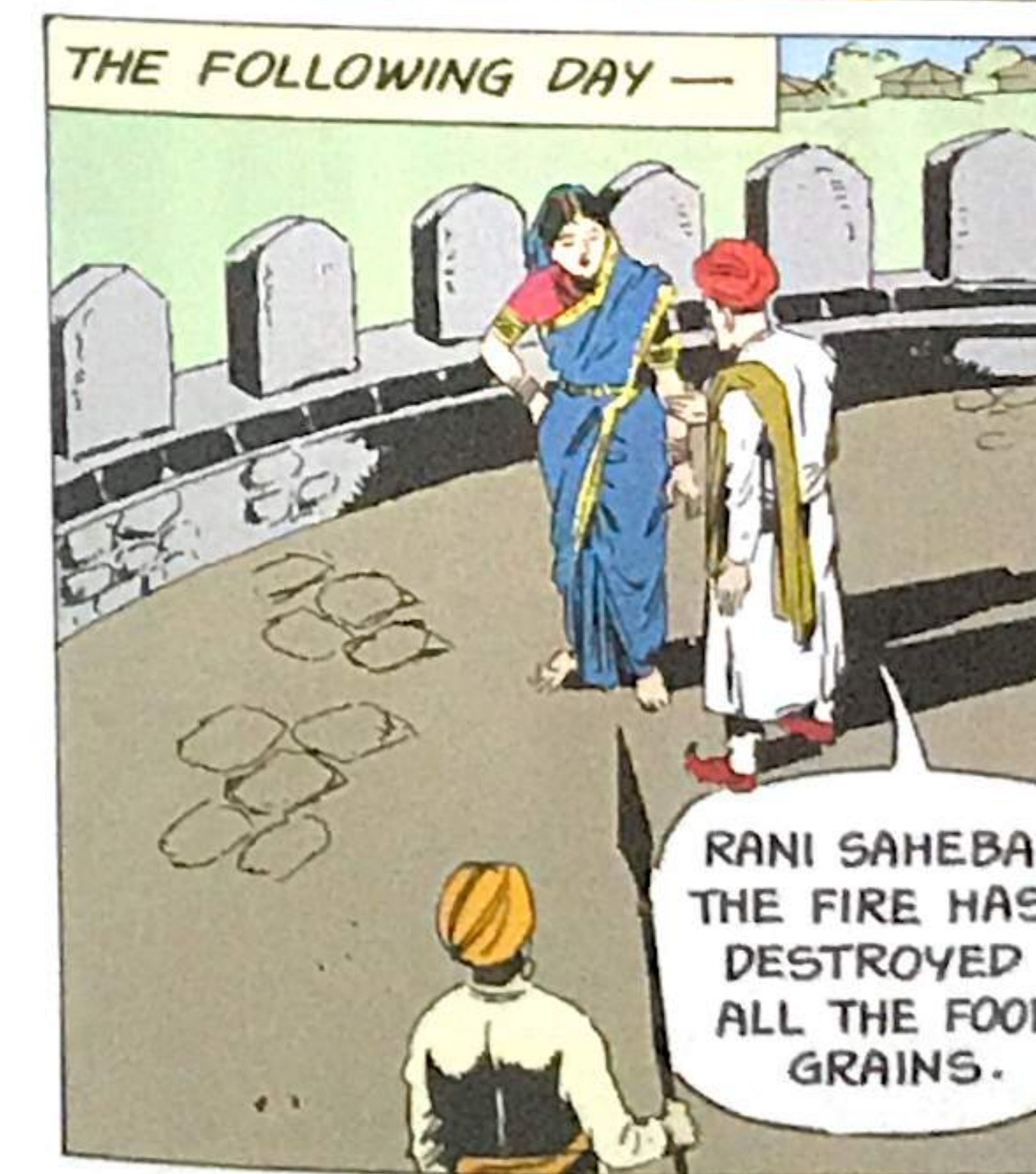
...SHE TOUCHED THE FEET OF HER DEAD
HUSBAND...



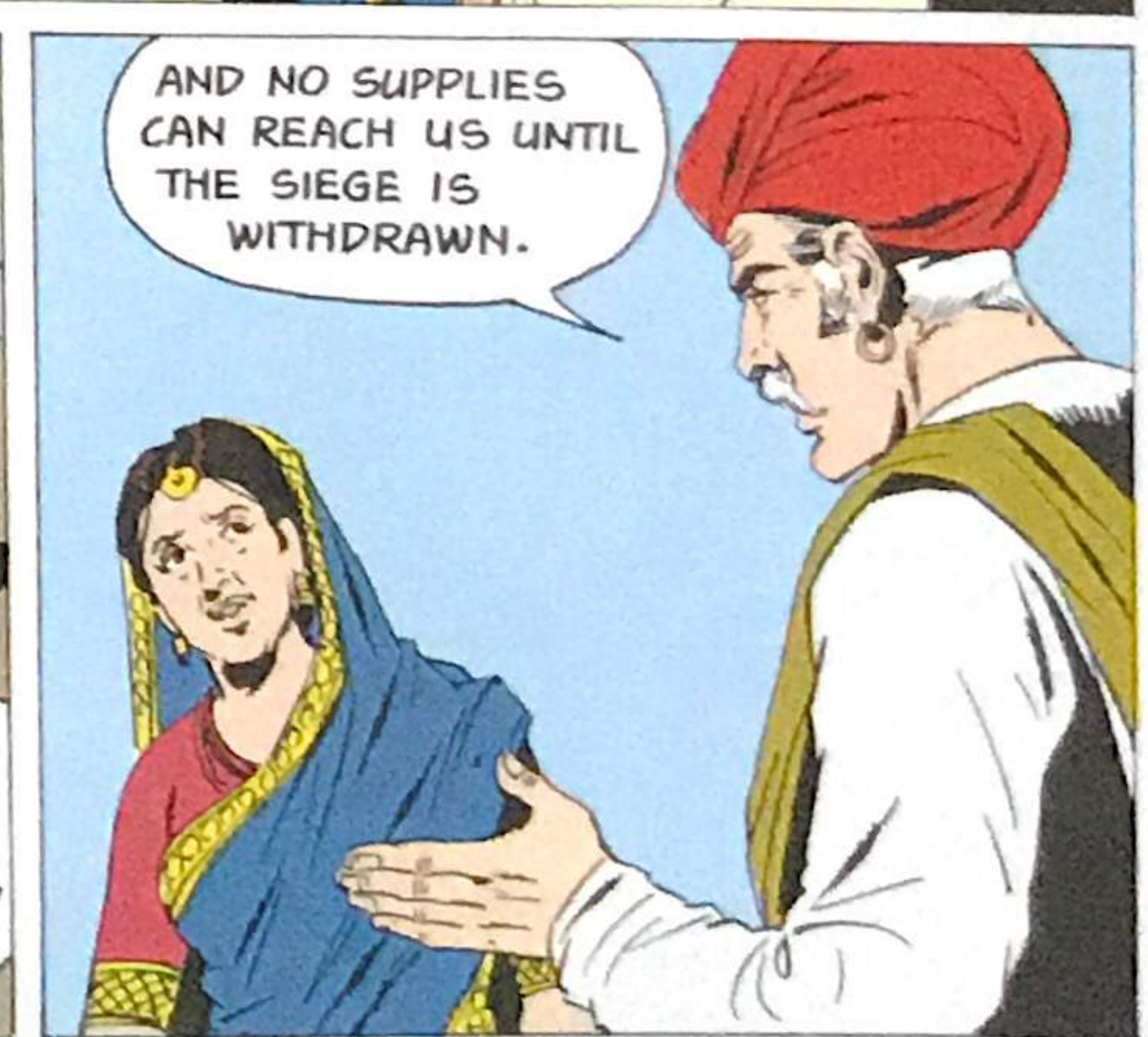
...AND PICKED UP THE SWORD
LYING BESIDE HIM.

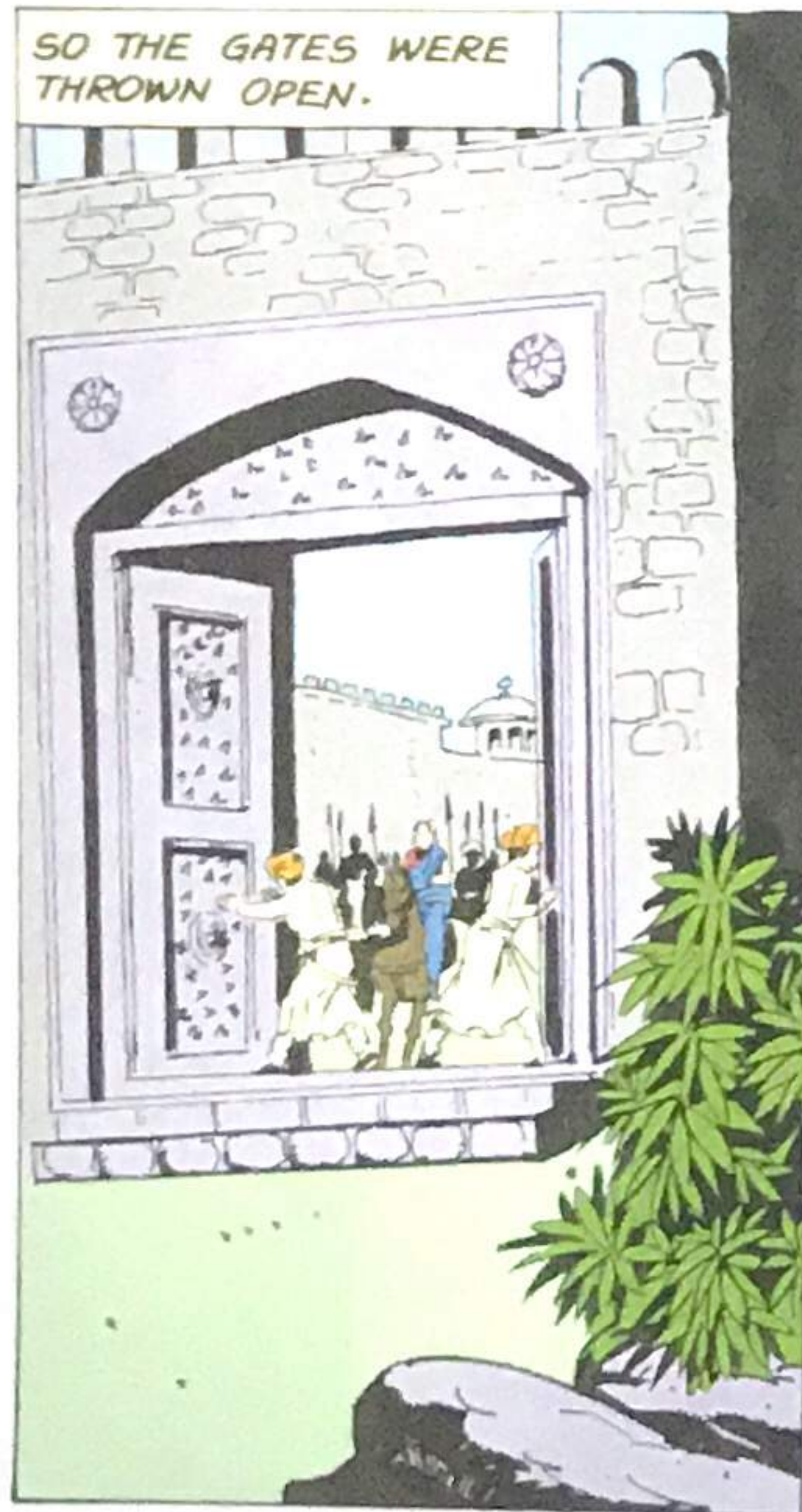
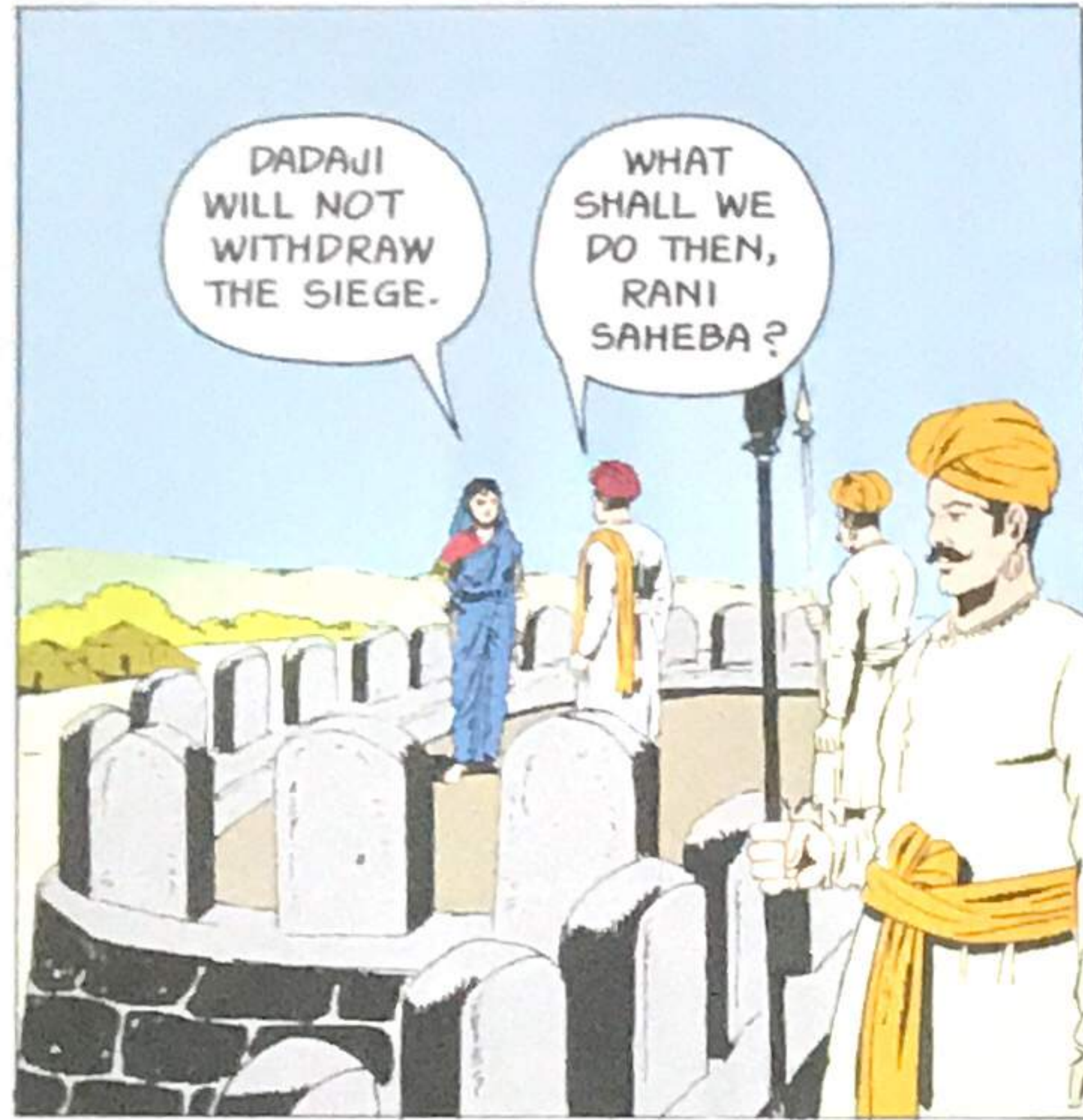


THE FOLLOWING DAY —

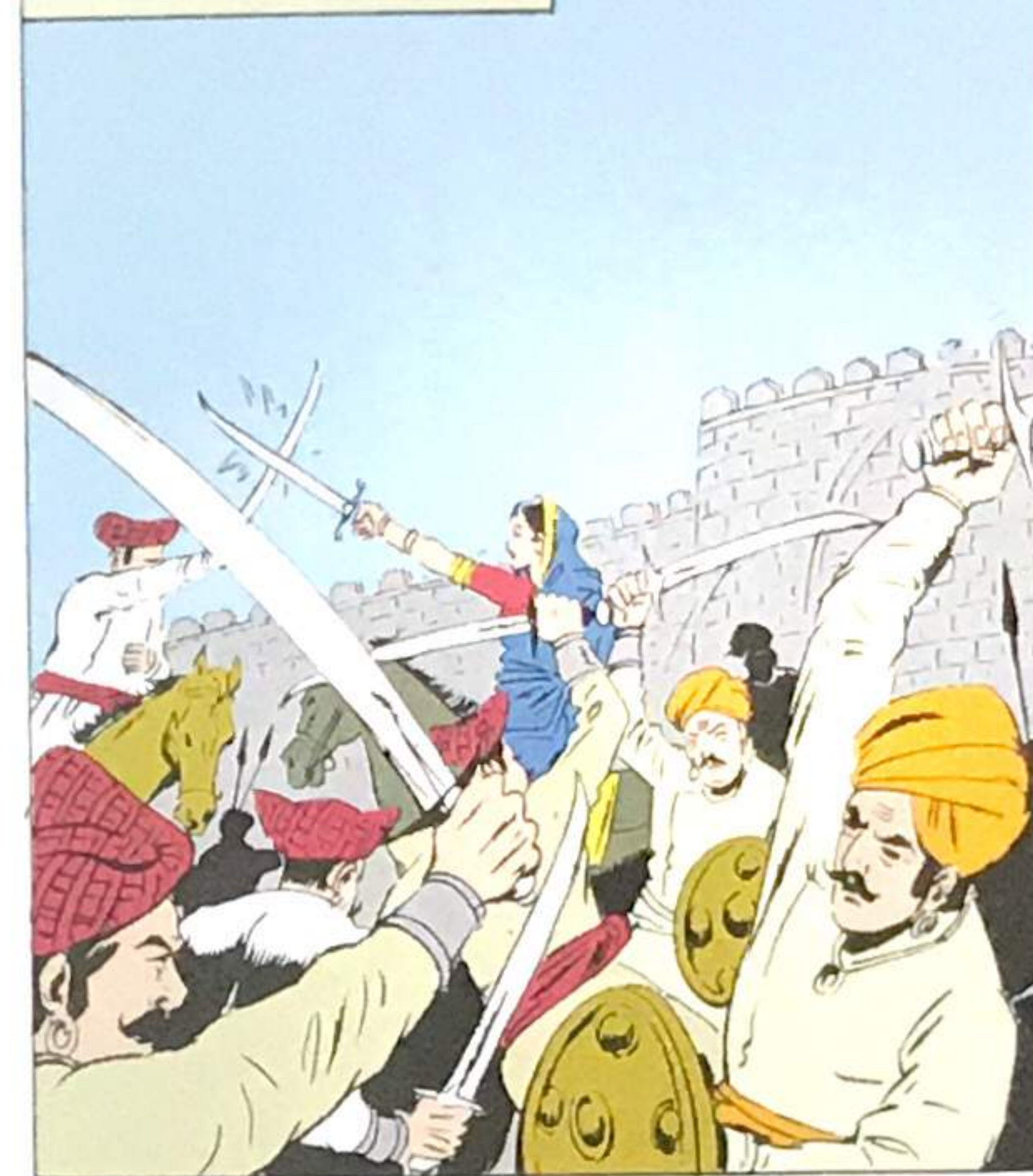


AND NO SUPPLIES
CAN REACH US UNTIL
THE SIEGE IS
WITHDRAWN.

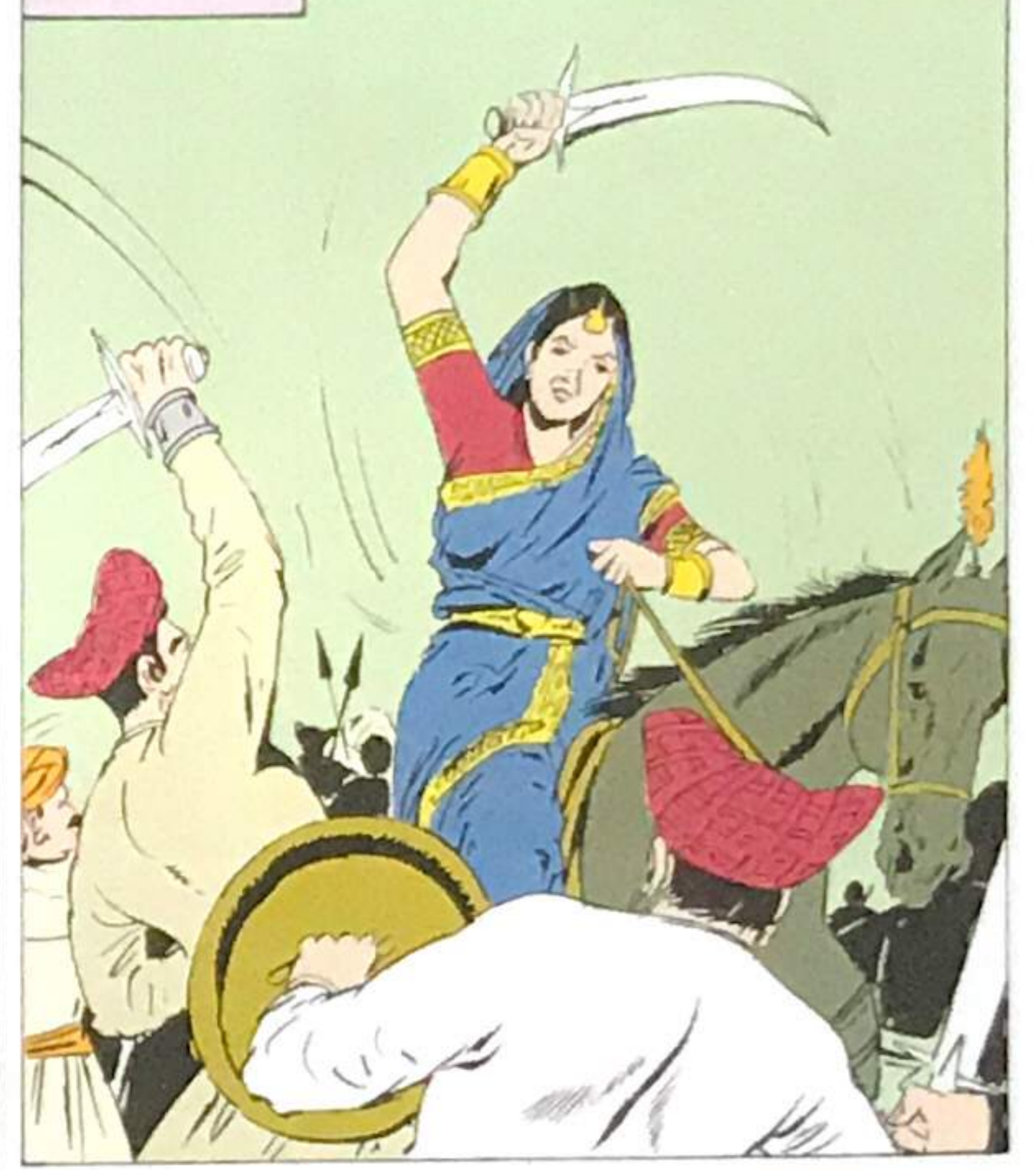




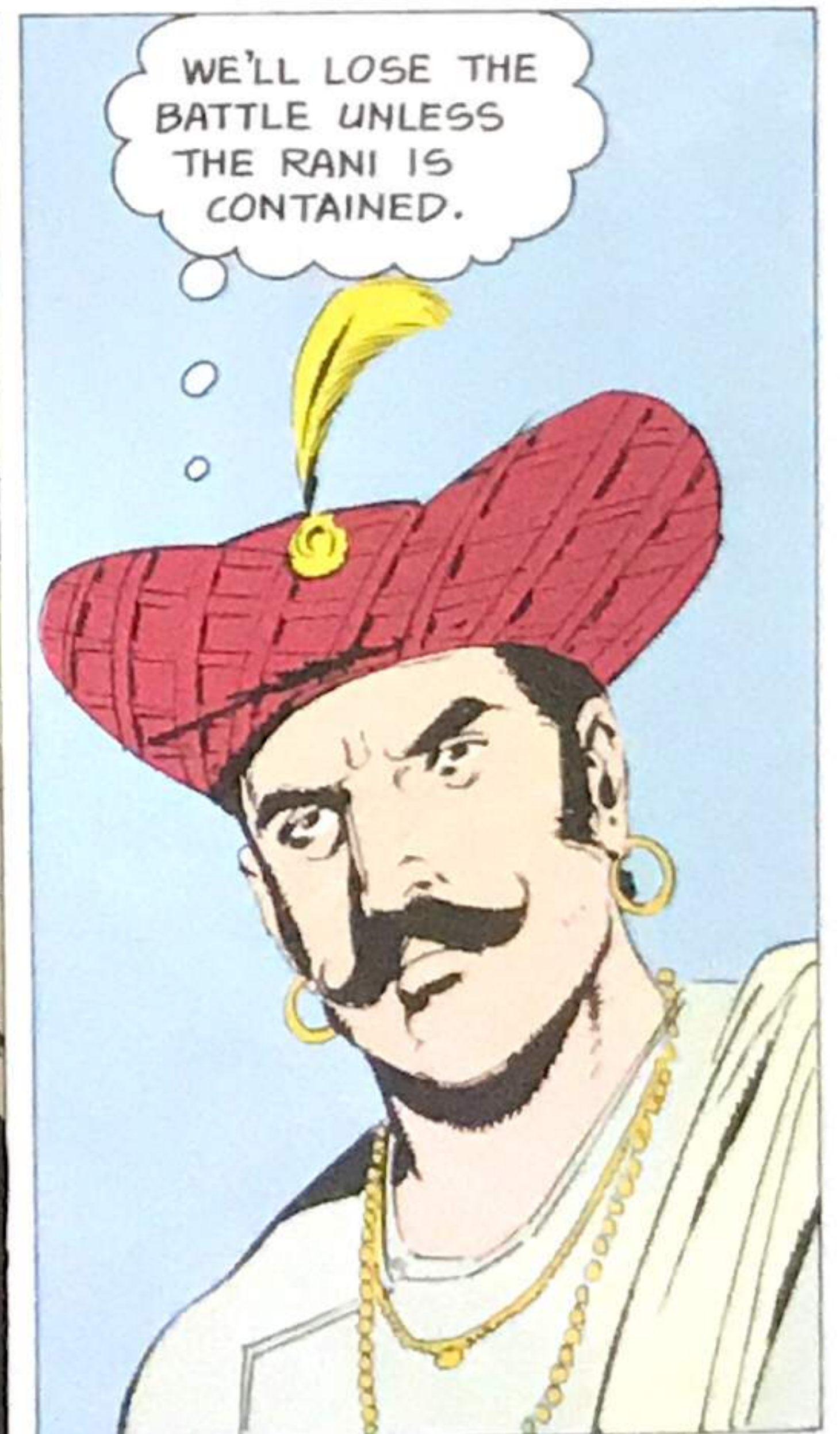
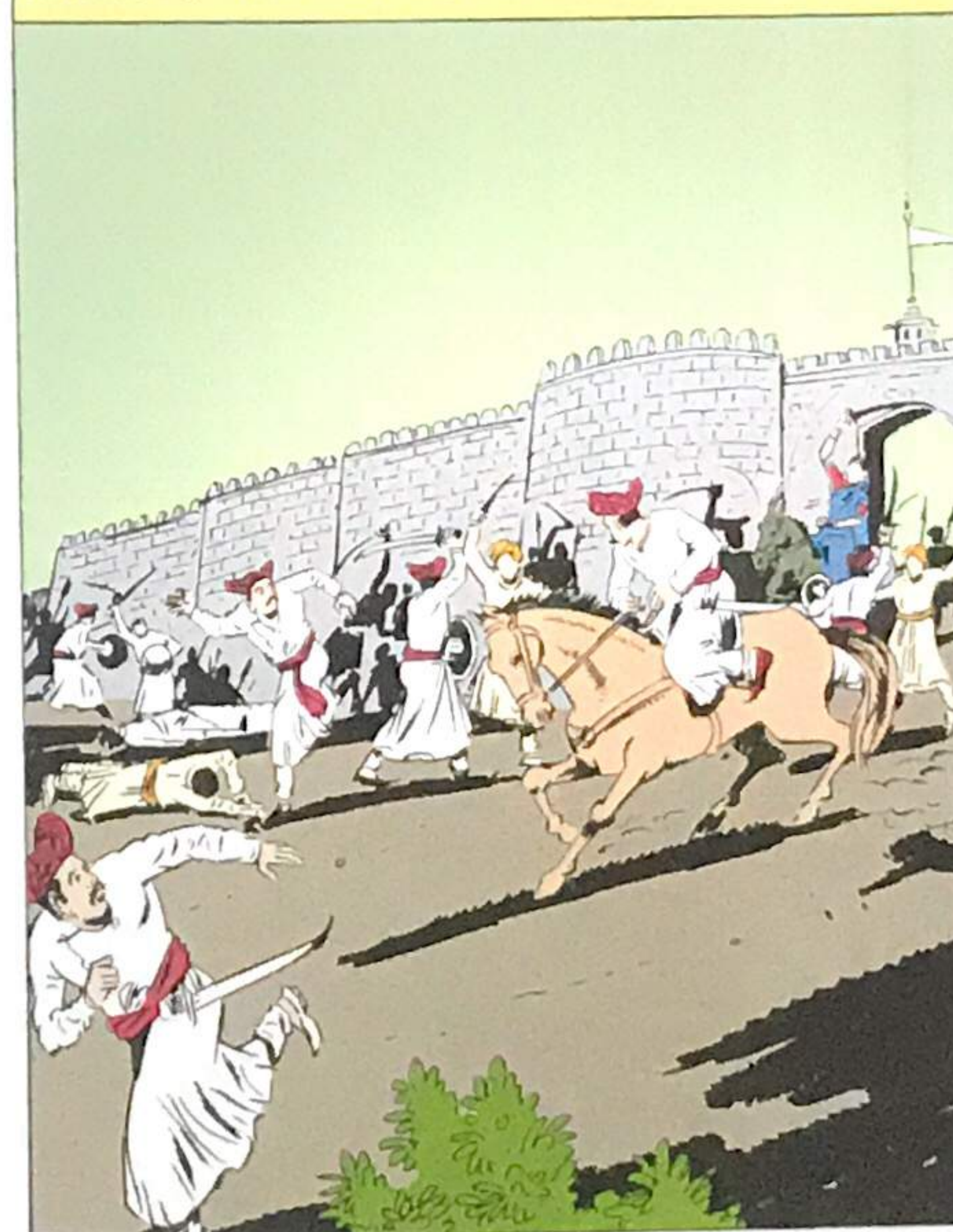
INSPIRED BY HER COURAGE THE MEN FOUGHT FIERCELY.



THE RANI MOVED WITH LIGHTNING SPEED.



DADAJI'S MEN REELED UNDER THE ATTACK.

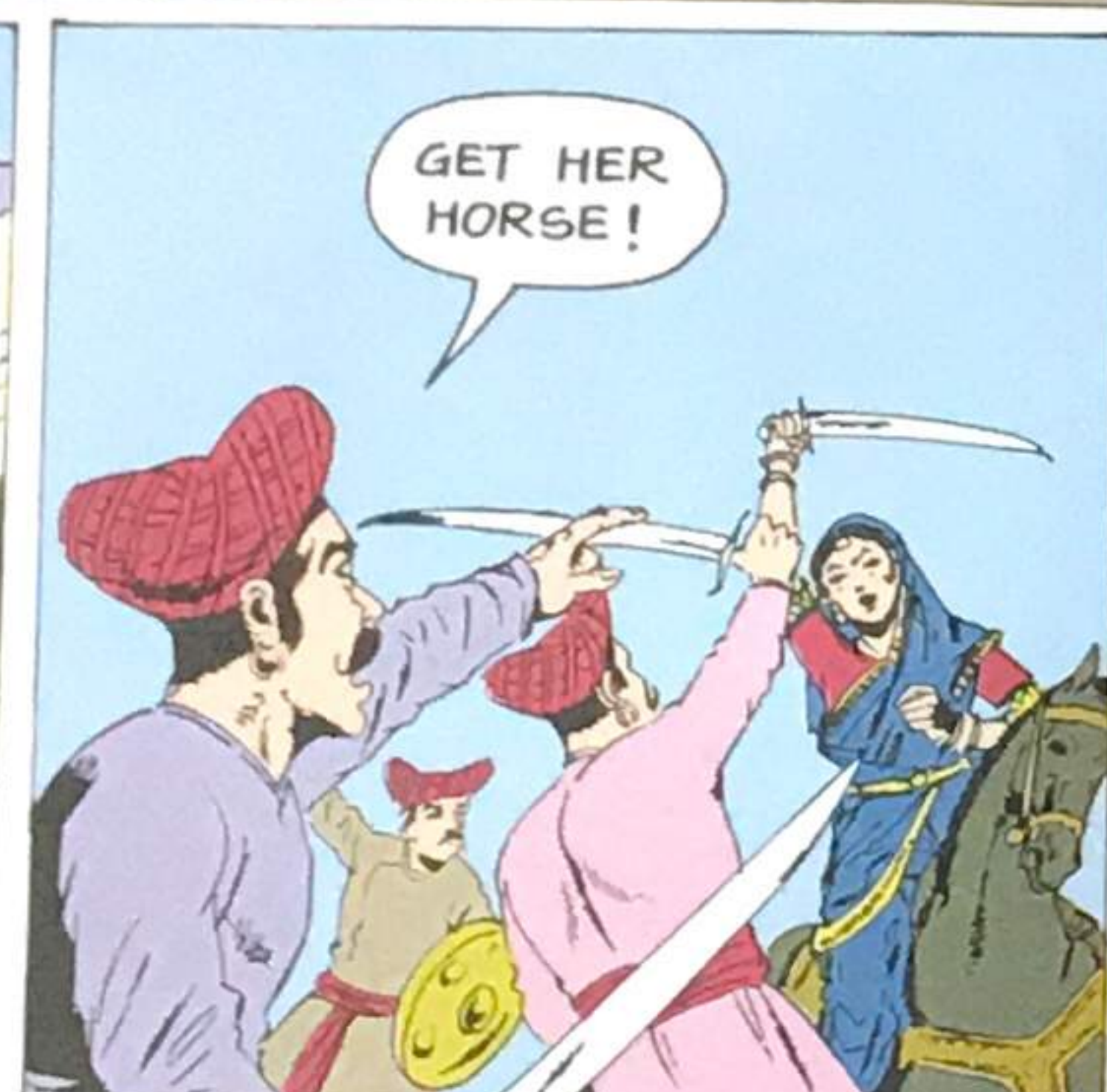
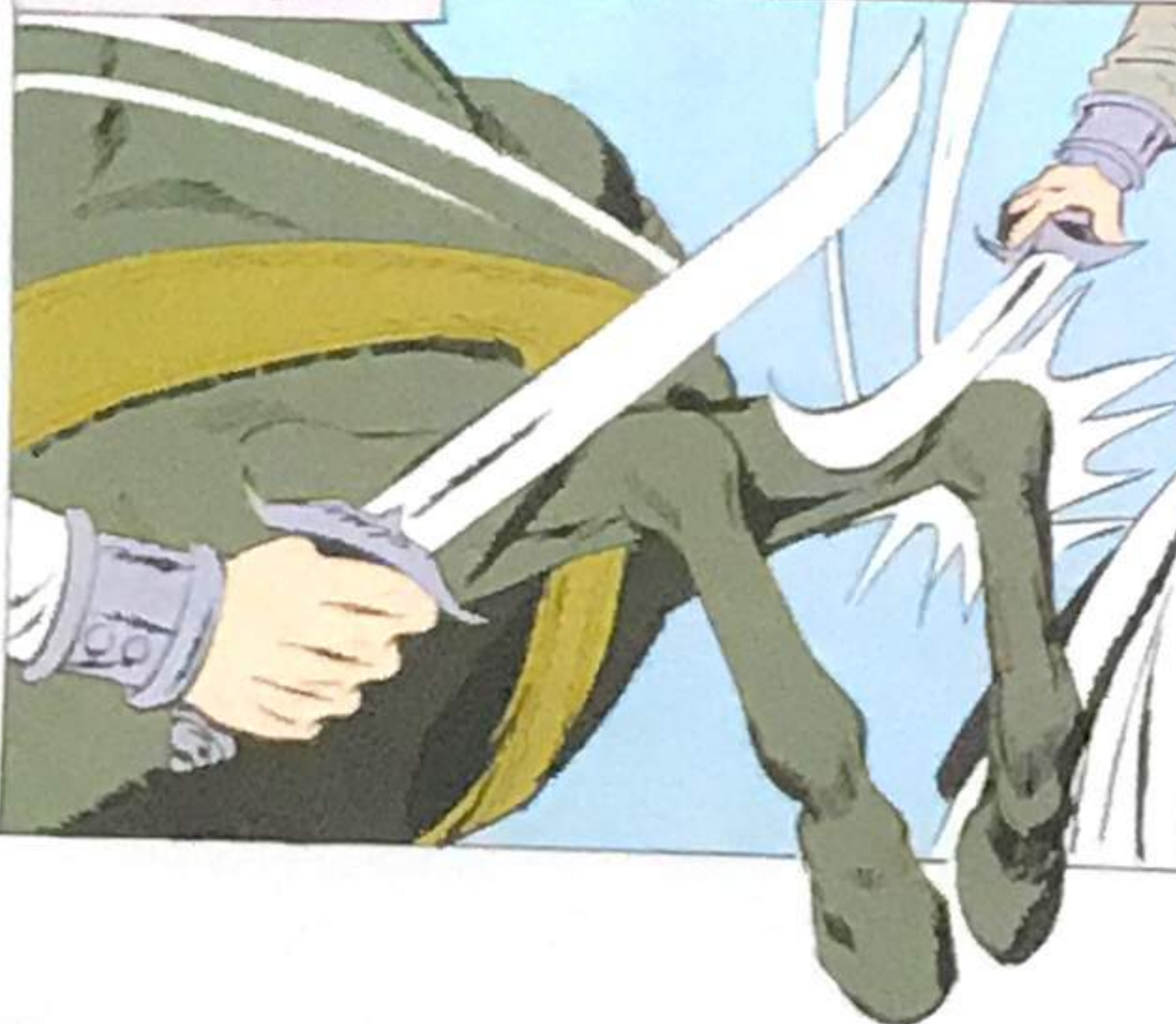




AS THE MEN CLOSED IN ON HER, THE RANI FOUGHT EVEN MORE VIGOROUSLY.



THE LEGS OF THE RANI'S HORSE WERE HACKED OFF.

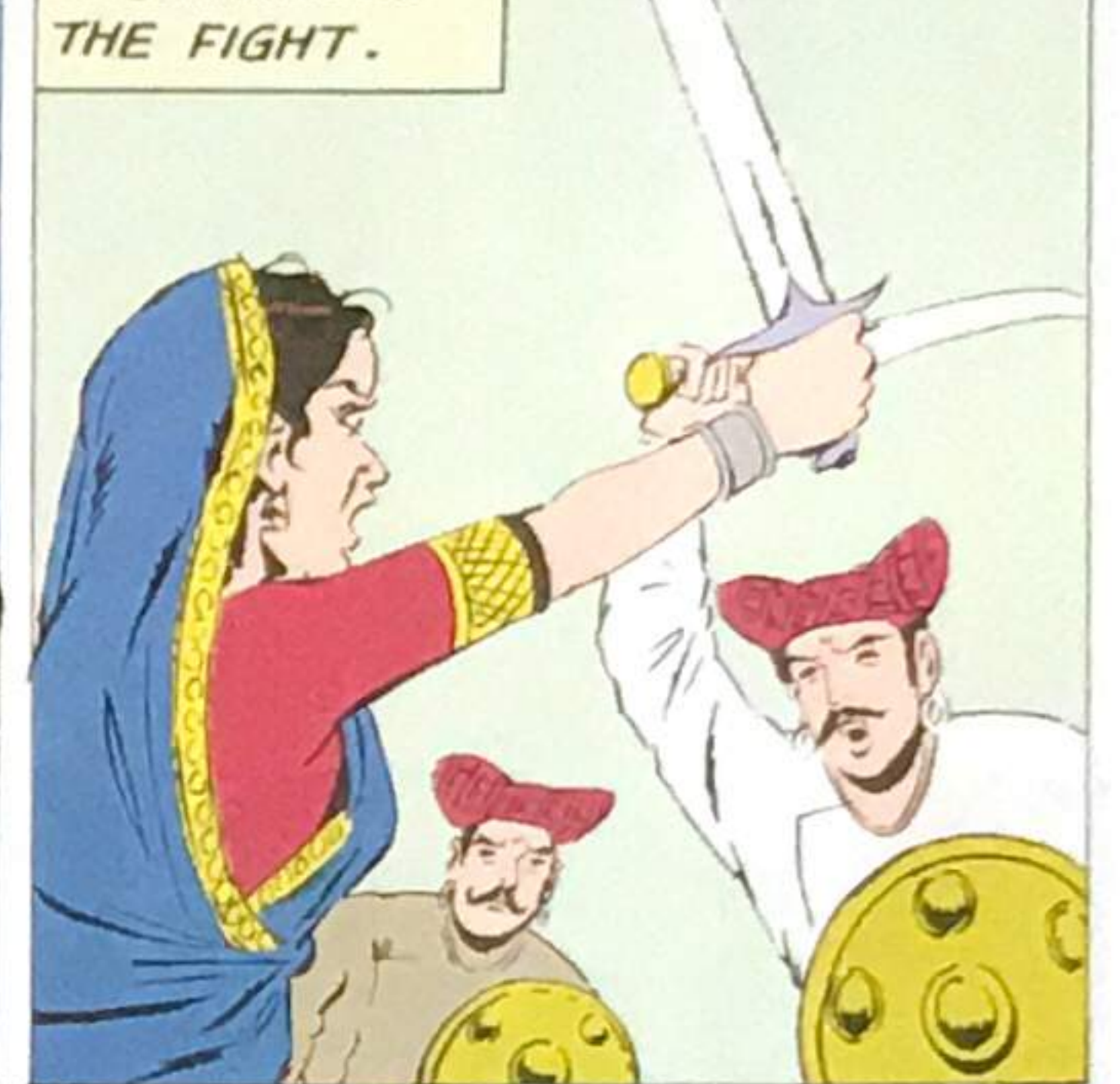


BUT THE RANI WAS QUICK.

SHE JUMPED OFF THE HORSE AND...



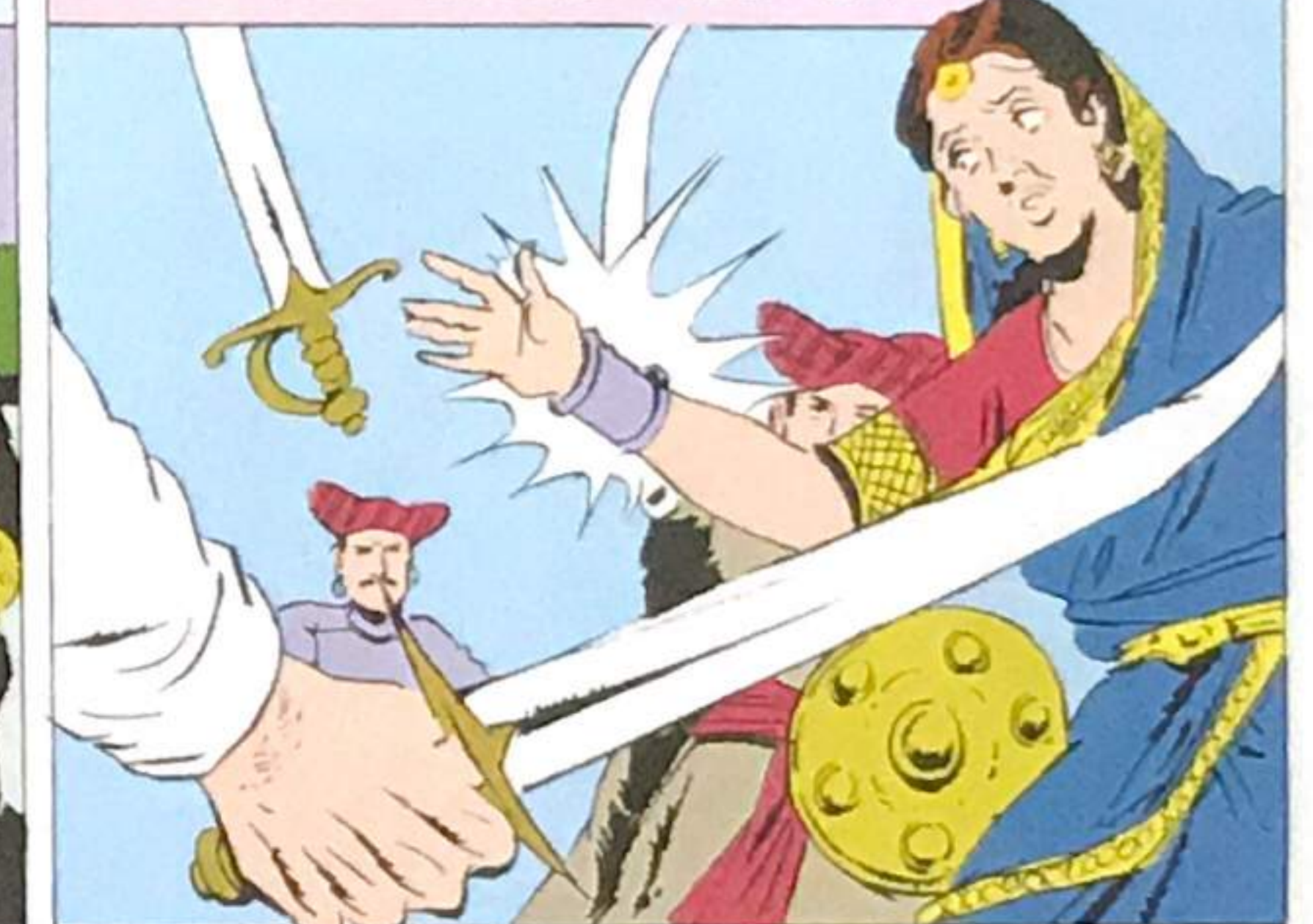
...CONTINUED THE FIGHT.



BUT SHE WAS STRUCK FROM BEHIND...



...AND HER SWORD FLEW OFF.



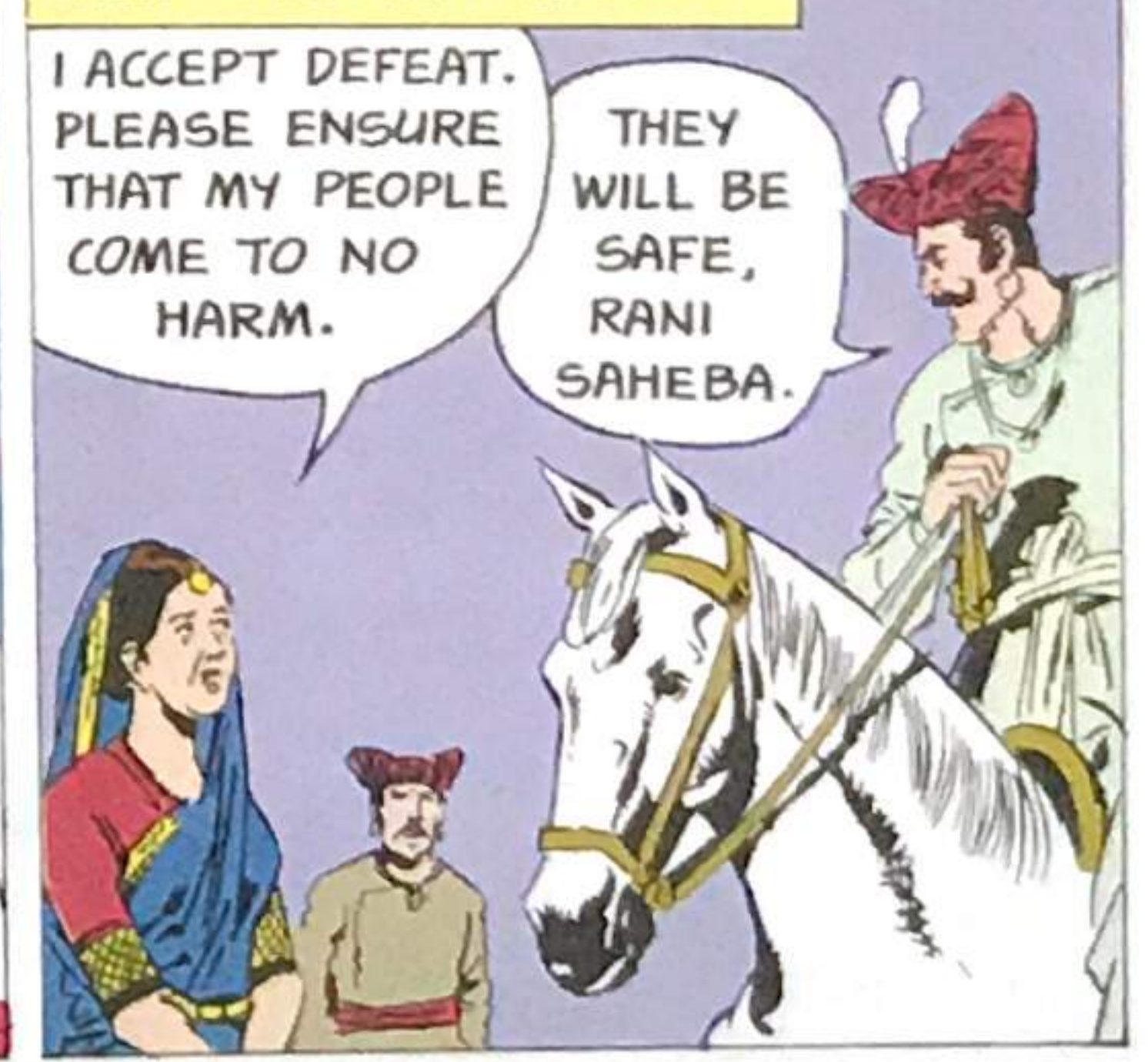
SHE STOOD DISARMED. NO ONE MOVED TOWARDS HER. ALL STOOD STILL.



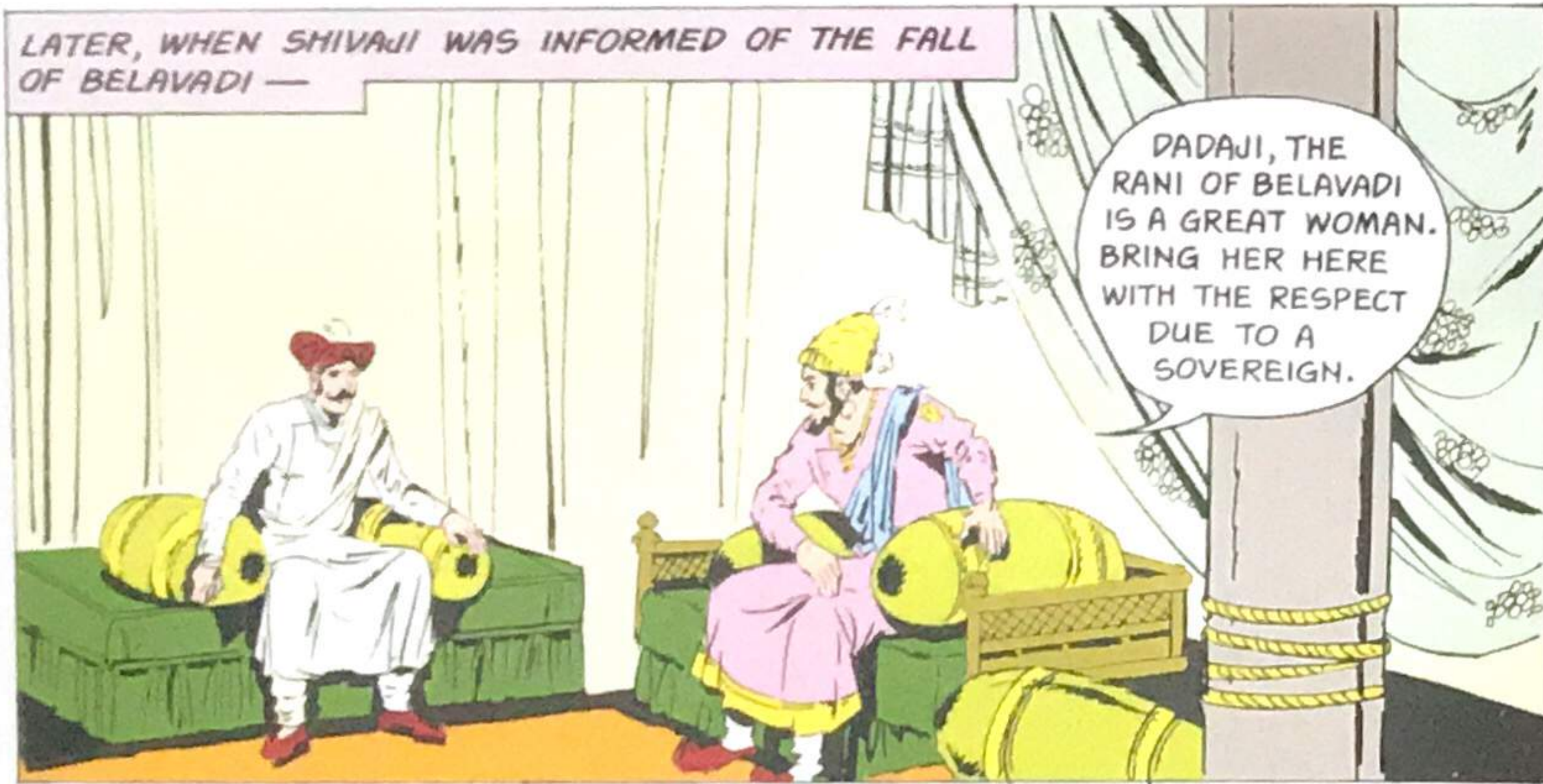
THEN THE RANI SPOKE.

I ACCEPT DEFEAT. PLEASE ENSURE THAT MY PEOPLE COME TO NO HARM.

THEY WILL BE SAFE, RANI SAHEBA.



LATER, WHEN SHIVAJI WAS INFORMED OF THE FALL OF BELAVADI —



WHEN THE RANI WAS BROUGHT TO HIS CAMP SHIVAJI STOOD UP TO RECEIVE HER.

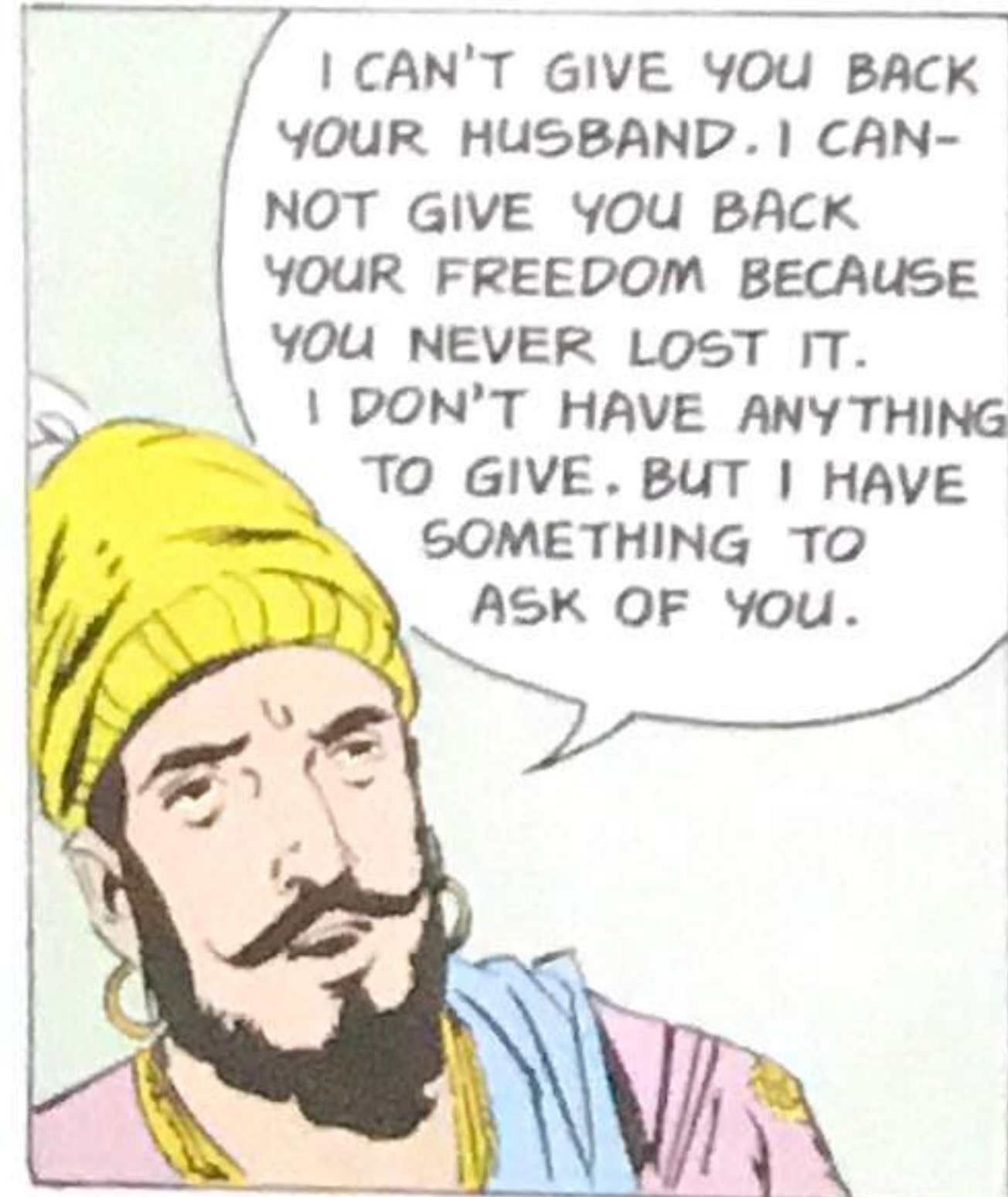
MOTHER, I SALUTE YOU FOR YOUR BRAVERY.



I DO NOT KNOW WHO IS THE VICTOR. I ONLY KNOW YOU ARE NOT THE VAN-QUISHED, YOU SHALL EVER REMAIN FREE.



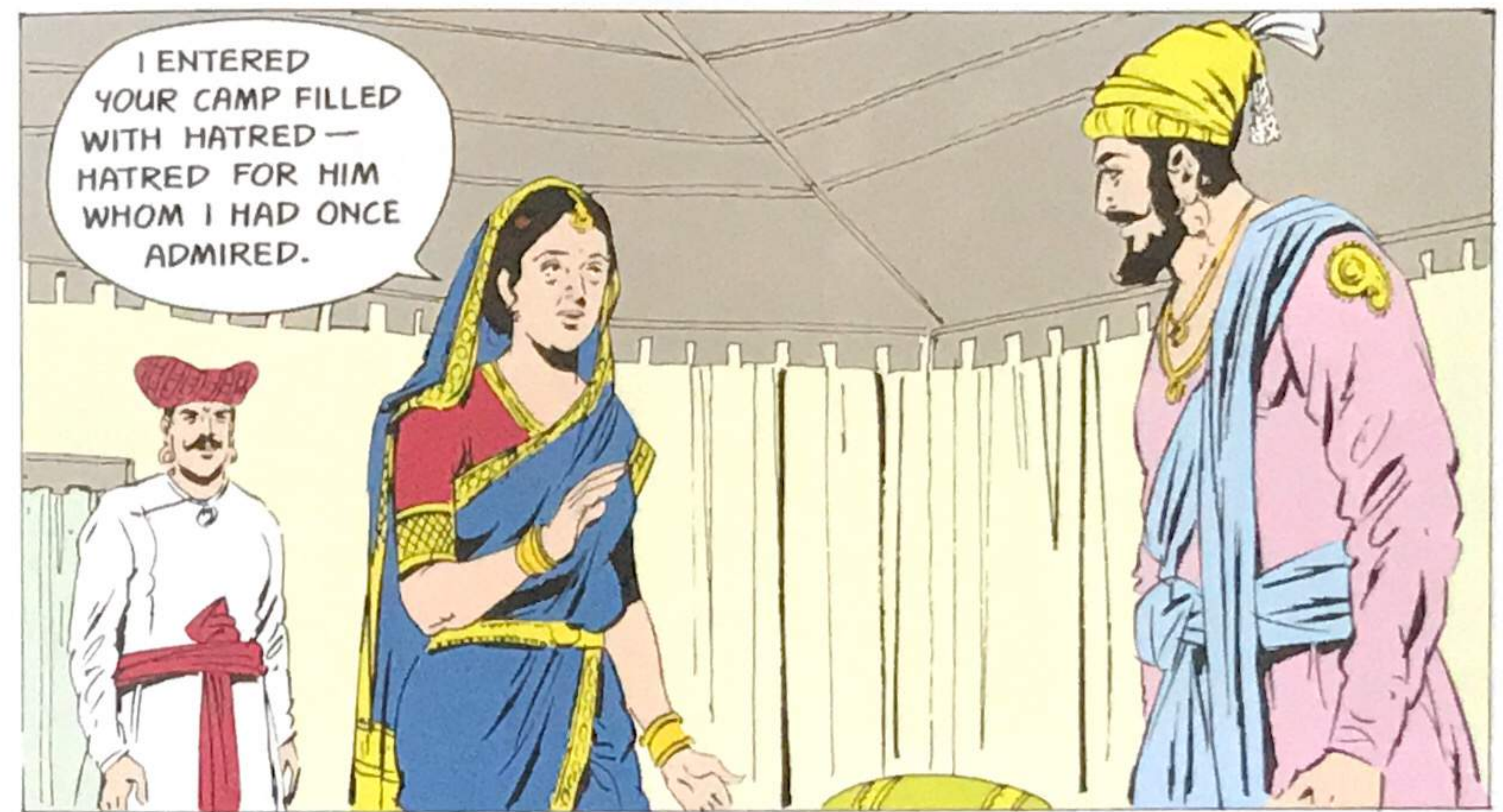
I CAN'T GIVE YOU BACK YOUR HUSBAND. I CAN- NOT GIVE YOU BACK YOUR FREEDOM BECAUSE YOU NEVER LOST IT. I DON'T HAVE ANYTHING TO GIVE. BUT I HAVE SOMETHING TO ASK OF YOU.



YOUR FORGIVENESS, MOTHER.



I ENTERED YOUR CAMP FILLED WITH HATRED — HATRED FOR HIM WHOM I HAD ONCE ADMIRER.



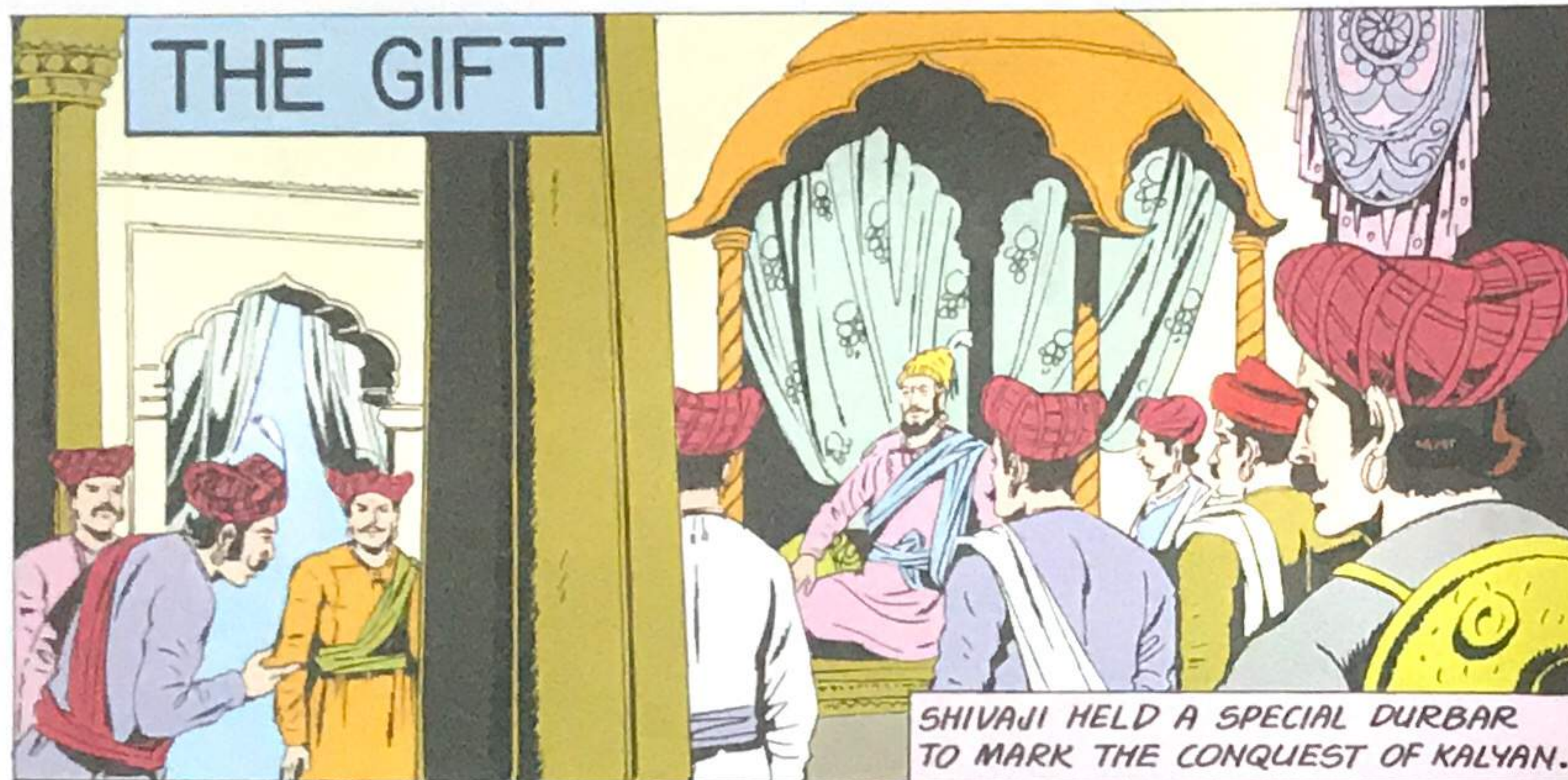
BUT YOUR WORDS HAVE DISPELLED MY HATRED. I NO LONGER FEEL BITTER.



BLESS ME, MOTHER. I NEED YOUR BLESSINGS.

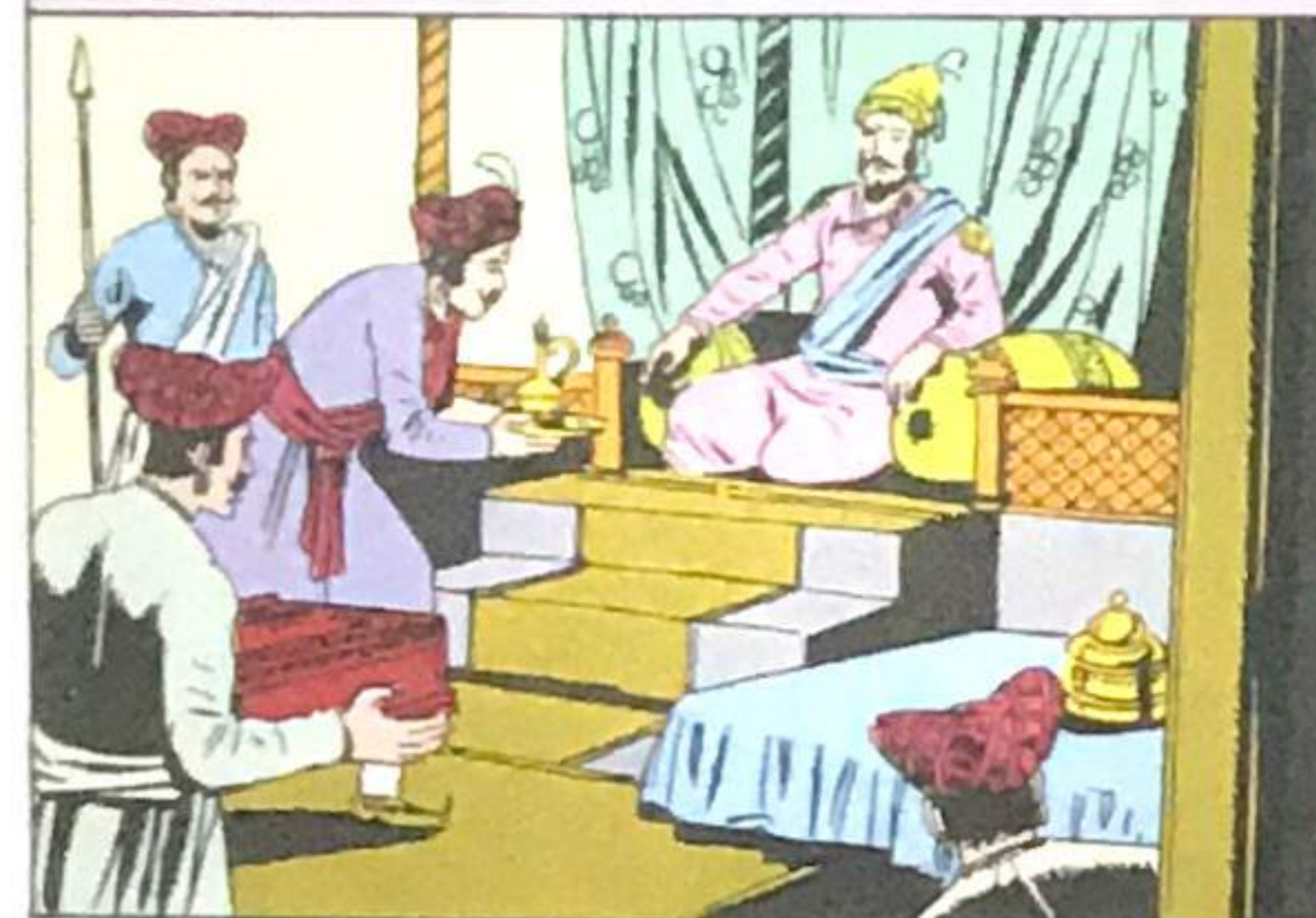
I WISH YOU WELL, MAHARAJ. MAY GOD BE WITH YOU!





SHIVAJI HELD A SPECIAL DURBAR TO MARK THE CONQUEST OF KALYAN.

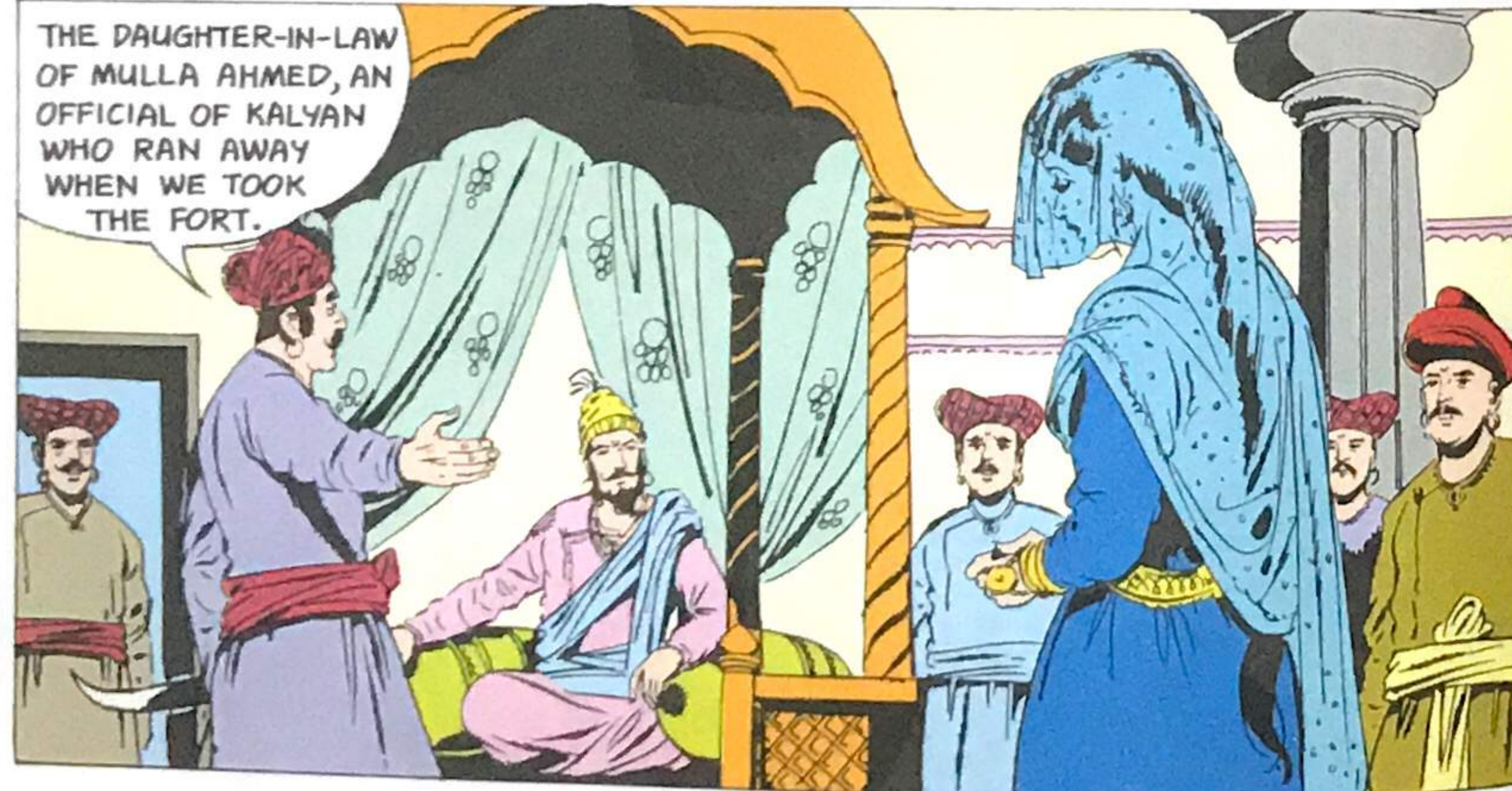
ONE BY ONE THE SPOILS OF THE CAMPAIGN WERE PRESENTED TO HIM.



ABAJI MAHADEV, THE COMMANDER-IN-CHARGE OF THE KALYAN CAMP HAD A UNIQUE GIFT TO OFFER.



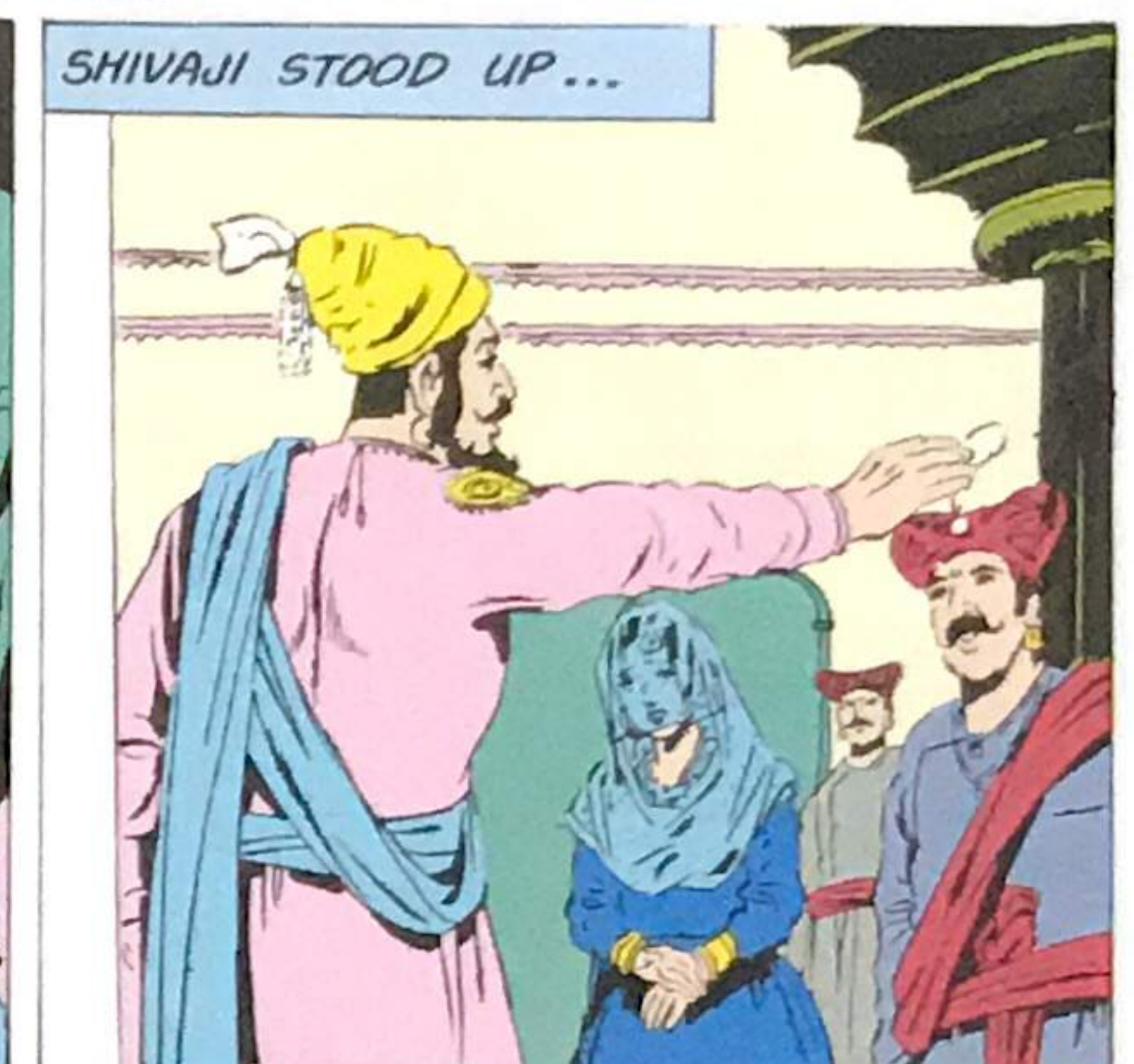
MAHARAJ!
I HAVE A
VERY
SPECIAL
GIFT FOR
YOU!



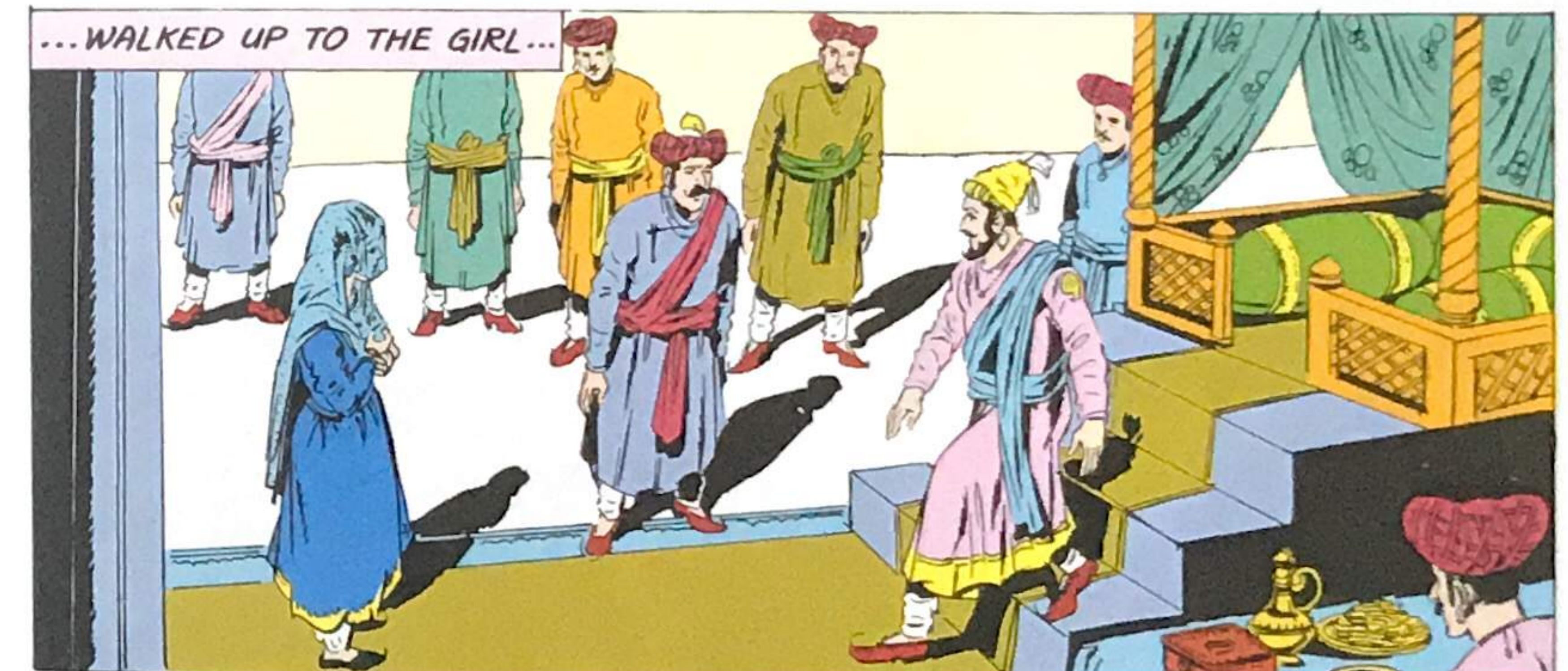
THE DAUGHTER-IN-LAW
OF MULLA AHMED, AN
OFFICIAL OF KALYAN
WHO RAN AWAY
WHEN WE TOOK
THE FORT.



ISN'T SHE
BEAUTIFUL?
WOULDN'T
YOU LOVE
TO OWN
HER?



SHIVAJI STOOD UP...

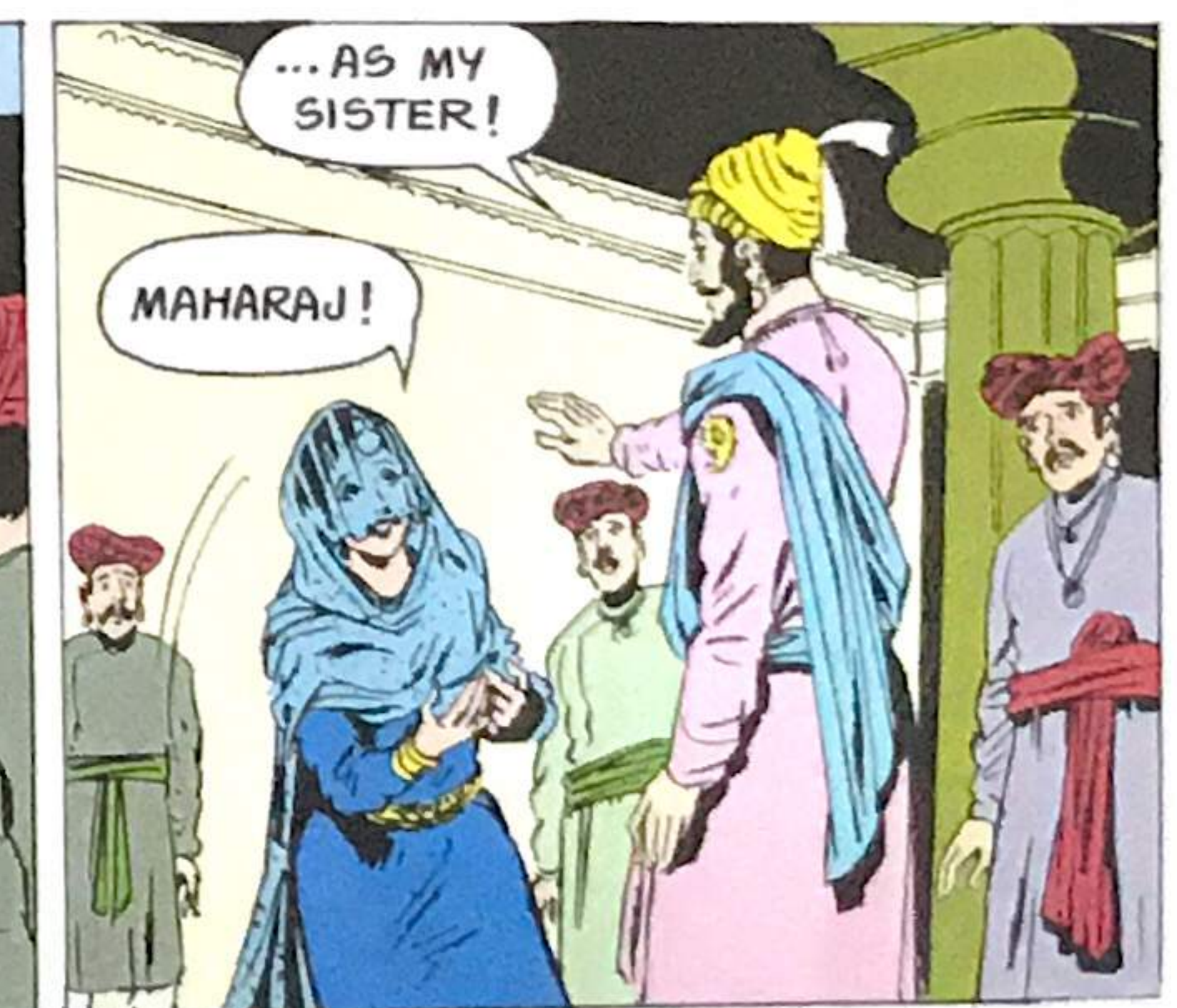


...WALKED UP TO THE GIRL...



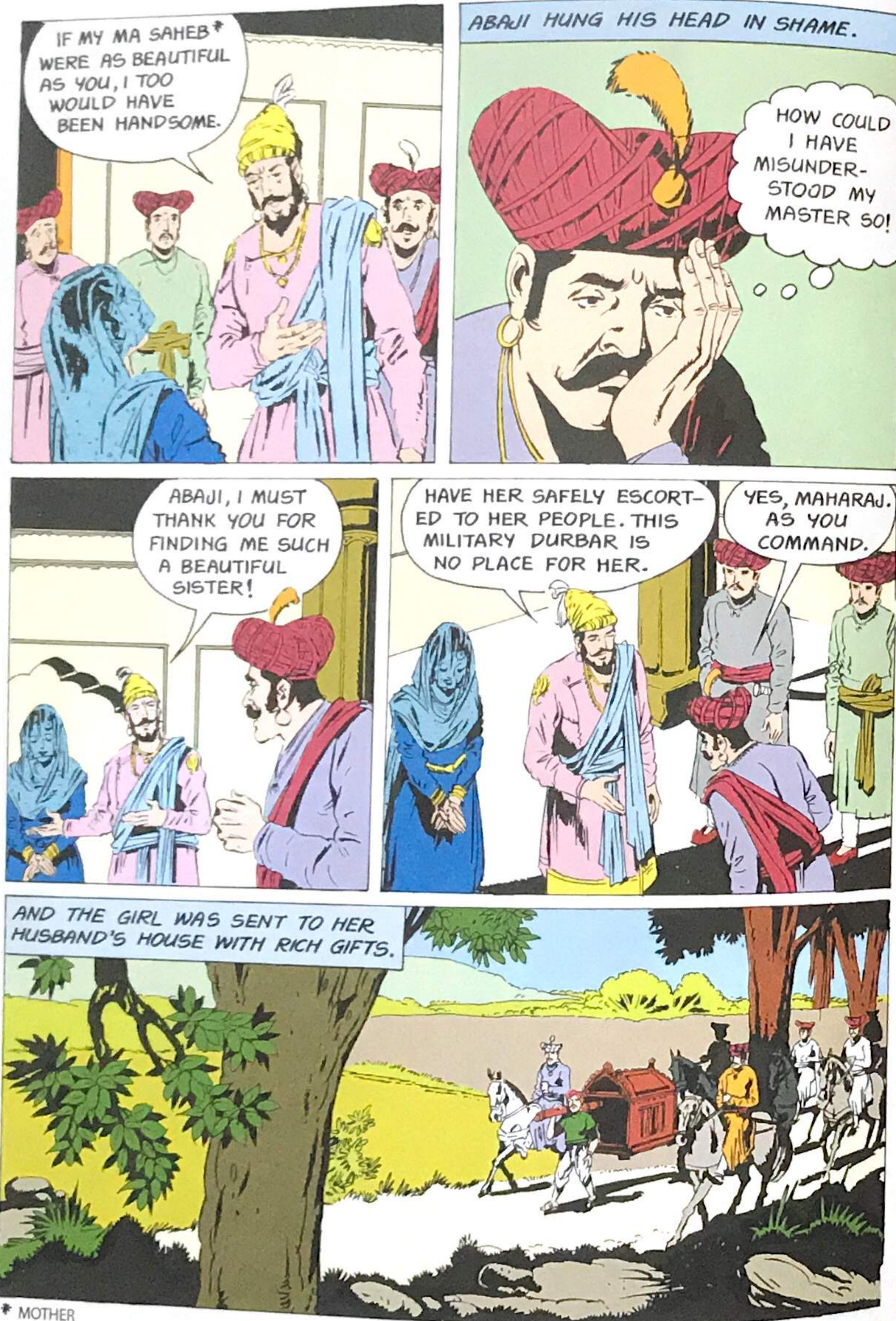
...AND PLACED HIS HAND ON HER
HEAD.

YES. I'D
LOVE TO
HAVE
YOU...



...AS MY
SISTER!

MAHARAJ!



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